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MONTHLY REVIEW

VOL. 50 7

DECEMBER 1998 $3.00/£2.00

AN INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST MAGAZINE

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1949-1999 50 YEARS

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MONTHLY REVIEW

VOLUME 50 NUMBER 7 DECEMBER 1998

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MONTHLY REVIEW (ISSN 0027 0520) is a publication of Monthly Review Foundation, a non-profit institution. It is published monthly except July and August, when bimonthly, and copyright © 1998, by Monthly Review. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send all address changes (Form 3579) to Monthly Review Foundation, 122 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001. EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS: 122 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001. Telephone: (212) 691-2555. Fax: (212) 727-3676 Email: mreview@igc.apc.org. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. *MR* is indexed in the PAIS Bulletin, Historical Abstracts, America: History and Life, Political Science Abstracts, and the Alternative Press Index, P.O. Box 7729, Baltimore, MD 21218, tel.: (301) 243-2471. NEWSSTAND DISTRIBUTION: B.De Boer, Inc., 113 E. Centre Street, Nutley, NJ 07110; Armadillo & Co., 5795 W. Washington Boulevard, Culver City, CA 90232; Small Changes, 3443 Twelfth Avenue West, Seattle, WA 98119; Central Books, 99 Wallis Road, London, E9 5LN, England. SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: U.S.: One year $28, students and senior citizens $23; Foreign $36; students and senior citizens $32. Libraries and Institutions: U.S. $48; Foreign $55. Additional Postage: First Class (U.S. $15); Airmail: Foreign and Canada $20.

NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

Back in 1972, when one of us was living in Toronto, the Canadian national hockey team played a series of much publicized games against the Soviet Union. Horror of horrors, the Soviet team started winning. The defeat of Canada's favorites at its own national sport, and, worst of all, at the hands of Communists, was an occasion for some deep national soul-searching in the mainstream press. There were some astonishing editorials, which came very close to questioning the fundamental values of capitalism if it could so weaken the moral fiber of Canadians as to lead them to defeat by the Communist adversary at their very own game.

We hope that the analogy we're about to draw won't seem frivolous, but something that's been happening in the Western press in recent months has brought that old episode to mind. It needs to be said, first, that, while Canada certainly played its own not so glorious part in the Cold War, it has

(Continued on inside back cover)

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MALTHUS' *ESSAY ON POPULATION* AT AGE 200: A MARXIAN VIEW

by JOHN BELLAMY FOSTER

Since it was first published 200 years ago in 1798, no other single work has constituted such a bastion of bourgeois thought as Thomas Malthus' *Essay on the Principle of Population.* No other work was more hated by the English working class, nor so strongly criticized by Marx and Engels. Although the Malthusian principle of population in its classical form was largely vanquished intellectually by the mid-nineteenth century, it continued to reemerge in new forms. In the late nineteenth century it took on new life as a result of the Darwinian revolution and the rise of social Darwinism. And in the late twentieth century Malthusianism reemerged once again in the form of neo-Malthusian ecology.

Today Malthus is commonly presented as an ecological thinker—counterposed to a classical Marxist tradition which (in large part because of its opposition to Malthus himself) is branded as anti-ecological. Hence, even some ecological socialists, such as Ted Benton, have gone so far as to argue that Marx and Engels were guilty of "a Utopian overreaction to Malthusian epistemic conservatism" which led them to downplay (or

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deny) "any ultimate natural limits to population" and indeed natural limits in general. Faced with Malthusian natural limits, we are told, Marx and Engels responded with "Promethean-ism"—a blind faith in the capacity of technology to overcome all ecological barriers.[1]

It therefore seems appropriate, on the bicentennial of Malthus' *Essay on Population*, to reconsider what Malthus stood for, the nature of Marx's and Engels' response, and the relation of this to contemporary debates about ecology and society. Contrary to most interpretations, Malthus' theory was not about the threat of "overpopulation" which may come about at some future date. Instead, it was his contention that there is a constant pressure of population against food supply which has always applied and will always apply. This means that there is effectively no such thing as "overpopulation" in the conventional sense. Engels was perfectly correct when he wrote in 1844 that according to the logic of Malthus' theory "the earth was already over-populated when only one man existed." Far from being an ecological contribution Malthus' argument was profoundly non-ecological (even anti-ecological) in nature, taking its fundamental import from an attempt to prove that future improvements in the condition of society, and more fundamentally in the condition of the poor, were impossible.

Malthus' *Essay on Population* went through six editions in his lifetime (1798, 1803, 1806, 1807, 1817, and 1826). The 1803 edition was almost four times as long as the first edition while excluding large sections of the former. It also had a new title and represented a shift in argument. It was therefore in reality a new book. In the subsequent editions, after 1803, the changes in the text were relatively minor. Hence, the 1798 edition of his essay is commonly known as the *First Essay* on population, and the 1803 edition (together with the editions of 1806, 1807, 1817, and 1826) is known as the *Second Essay*. In order to understand Malthus' overall argument it is necessary to see how his position changed from the *First Essay* to the *Second Essay*.

The First Essay

The full title of the *First Essay* was *An Essay on the Principle of Population as it Effects the Future Improvement of Society; with Remarks on the Speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet and Other Writers.* As the title indicates it was an attempt to intervene in a debate

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on the question of the future improvement of society. The specific controversy in question can be traced back to the publication in 1761 of a work entitled *Various Prospects for Mankind, Nature, and Providence* by Robert Wallace, an Edinburgh minister. Wallace, who in his earlier writings had demonstrated that human population if unchecked tended to increase exponentially, doubling every few decades, made a case in *Various Prospects* that while the creation of a "perfect government," organized on an egalitarian basis was conceivable, it would be at best temporary, since under these circumstances "mankind, would increase so prodigiously that the earth would be left overstocked and become unable to support its inhabitants." Eventually, there would come a time "when our globe, by the most diligent culture, could not produce what was sufficient to nourish its numerous inhabitants." Wallace went on to suggest that it would be preferable if the human vices, by reducing population pressures, should prevent the emergence of a government not compatible with the "circumstances of Mankind upon the Earth."

Wallace's argument was strongly opposed by William Godwin in his Enlightenment utopian argument for a more egalitarian society, which he enunciated in his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness.* First published in 1793, it was followed by a second edition in 1795 and a third edition in 1797 (the year before Malthus' essay appeared). In answer to Wallace, who had claimed that excessive population would result eventually from any perfect government, thus undermining its existence, Godwin contended that human population "will perhaps never be found in the ordinary course of affairs, greatly to increase, beyond the facility of subsistence." Population tended to be regulated in human society in accordance with conditions of wealth and wages. "It is impossible where the price of labour is greatly reduced, and an added population threatens still further reduction, that men should not be considerably under the influence of fear, respecting an early marriage, and a numerous family." For Godwin there were "various methods, by the practice of which population may be checked; by the exposing of children, as among the ancients, and, at this day, in China; by the art of procuring abortion, as it is said to subsist in the island of Ceylon ... or lastly, by a systematical abstinence such as must be supposed, in some

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degree, to prevail in monasteries of either sex." But even without such extreme practices and institutions, "the encouragement or discouragement that arises from the general state of a community," he insisted, "will probably be found to be all-powerful in its operation."

Malthus set out to overturn Godwin's argument by changing the terrain of debate; rather than contending, like Wallace before him, that a "perfect government" would eventually be undermined by the overstocking of the earth with human inhabitants, Malthus insisted that there was a constant tendency toward equilibrium between population and food supply. Nevertheless, population tended naturally when unchecked to increase at a geometrical rate (1, 2, 4, 8, 16), while food supply increased at best at an arithmetical rate (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). Under these circumstances attention needed to be given to the checks that ensured that population stayed in equilibrium (apart from minor fluctuations) with the limited means of subsistence. These checks, Malthus argued, were all reducible to vice and misery, taking such forms as promiscuity before marriage, which limited fecundity (a common assumption in Malthus' time), sickness, plagues, and—ultimately, if all other checks fell short, the dreaded scourge of famine. Since such misery and vice was necessary at all times to keep population in line with subsistence any future improvement of society, as envisioned by thinkers like Godwin and Condorcet, he contended, was impossible.

Malthus himself did not use the term "overpopulation" in advancing his argument—though it was used from the outset by his critics.[2] Natural checks on population were so effective, in Malthus' late-eighteenth-century perspective, that overpopulation, in the sense of the eventual overstocking of the globe with human inhabitants, was not the thing to be feared. The problem of an "overcharged population" existed not at "a great distance" (as Godwin had said), but rather was *always* operative, even at a time when most of the earth was uncultivated. In response to Condorcet he wrote "M. Condorcet thinks that it [the possibility of a period arising when the world's population has reached the limits of its subsistence] cannot .. be applicable but at an era extremely distant. If the proportion between the natural increase of population and food which I have given be in any degree near the truth, it will appear, on the contrary, that the period when the number of men surpass their means of

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subsistence [in later editions this was changed to "easy means of subsistence"—see note 2 above] has arrived, and that this necessary oscillation, this constantly subsisting cause of periodical misery, has existed ever since we have had any histories of mankind." In the 1803 edition of his work on population he wrote, "Other persons, besides Mr. Godwin, have imagined that I looked to certain periods in the future when population would exceed the means of subsistence in a much greater degree than at present, and that the evils arising from the principle of population were rather in contemplation than in existence; but this is a total misconception of the argument."

For Malthus, relatively low or stagnant population growth was taken as a sign of population pressing on the means of subsistence; while high population growth was an indication that a country was underpopulated. "In examining the principal states of modern Europe," he wrote, "we shall find that though they have increased very considerably in population since they were nations of shepherds, yet that at present their progress is but slow, and instead of doubling their numbers every twenty-five years they require three or four hundred years, or more, for that purpose." Nothing else, in Malthus' terms, so clearly demonstrated the reality of a population that had reached its limits of subsistence.

Malthus' only original idea in his population theory, as Marx emphasized, was his arithmetical ratio. But for this he had little or no evidence. He merely espoused it on the basis that it conformed to what, he claimed, any knowledgeable observer of the state of agriculture would be forced to admit. Indeed, if there was a basis at all for Malthus' arithmetical ratio it could be found in his pre-Darwinian understanding of the natural world (as represented in his time by the work of thinkers such as Carolus Linnaeus and William Paley), in which he assumed that there was only limited room for "improvement" in plant and animal species.

Later on, it is true, it became common to see the so-called law of diminishing returns to land of classical economics as the basis for Malthus' arithmetical ratio. But that theory—outside of the work of the gentleman farmer and political economist James Anderson, one of Malthus' most formidable opponents—did not exist even in nascent form before the end of the Napoleonic wars and does not appear except in vague sugges-

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tions in any of the six editions of Malthus' *Essay*. It therefore cannot be seen as the foundation for Malthus' argument. As the great conservative economist Joseph Schumpeter remarked, "The 'law' of diminishing returns from land ... was entirely absent from Malthus' *Essay*."

Malthus' *Essay on Population* also appeared some four decades before the emergence of modern soil science in the work of Justus von Liebig and others. Hence, along with his great contemporary David Ricardo, he saw the fertility of the soil as subject to only very limited improvement. Nor was soil degradation an issue, as Marx, following Liebig, was later to argue. For Malthus, the properties of the soil were not subject to historical change, but were simply "gifts of nature to man" and, as Ricardo said, "indestructible."

The fact that Malthus offered no basis for his arithmetical ratio, as well as the admission that he was forced to make in the course of his argument that there were occasions in which food had increased geometrically to match a geometric rise in population (as in North America)—thereby falsifying his own thesis—did not pass by Malthus' contemporary critics, who were unsparing in their denunciations of his doctrine. In the *Second Essay* (1806 edition) Malthus therefore resorted to sheer bombast in place of argument. As he put it, "It has been said that I have written a quarto volume to prove that population increases in a geometrical, and food in an arithmetical ratio; but this is not quite true. The first of these propositions I considered as proved the moment the American increase was related, and the second proposition as soon as it was enunciated." As one of his contemporary critics responded, "These phrases, if they mean any thing, must mean that the geometrical ratio was admitted on very slight proofs, the arithmetical ratio was asserted on no evidence at all."

All of this meant that the *First Essay* was a failure in that the argument was clearly insupportable. The logic of the argument (even if one accepted Malthus' ratios) required that virtuous restraint from marriage either of a temporary or a permanent nature (and not attended by sexual liaisons of another sort) was an impossibility; and that virtuous limits to procreation within marriage were also impossible (Malthus never gave up his opposition to all forms of contraception). Such an argument could not stand in the face of reality, contradicting as it did the

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marriage pattern of the propertied classes in the England of that day. Hence, Malthus was eventually forced to concede in response to criticisms that some form of moral restraint (especially among the upper classes) was indeed possible—a moral restraint that he was nevertheless to define in extremely restrictive terms as "temporary or final abstinence from marriage on prudential considerations [usually having to do with property], with strict chastity during the single state." For Malthus, the operation of such narrowly defined moral restraint was "not very powerful." Still, once this was admitted his whole argument against Godwin and Condorcet lost most of its force.

The Second Essay

For this reason Malthus' *Second Essay*, in which he admitted to the possibility of moral restraint, is a very different work from the *First Essay*. Reflecting this the title itself changed to: *An Essay on the Principle of Population; or a View of its Past and Present Effects on Human Happiness; with an Inquiry into our Prospects Respecting the Future Removal or Mitigation of the Evils which it Occasions*. No more is there any reference in the title to the question of "the future improvement of society" or to Godwin or Condorcet. The main thrust of the work in the *Second Essay* is an attack on the English Poor Laws, a theme which only played a subordinate role in the *First Essay*.

According to the great Malthus-scholar Patricia James (editor of the variorum edition of his *Essay on Population*), "it was the 1803 essay [the earliest edition of the *Second Essay*] which made the greatest impression on contemporary thought." This was because of the severity of the attack on the poor to be found in that work. Although Malthus said in the preface to the *Second Essay* that he had "endeavoured to soften some of the harshest conclusions of the first essay" this related mainly to his introduction of the possibility of moral restraint (applicable chiefly to the upper classes). In relation to the poor (who, he believed, were incapable of such moral restraint) his essay was even harsher than before. And it is here, particularly in the 1803 edition, that the most notorious passages are to be found. Thus he wrote that, "With regard to illegitimate children, after the proper notice has been given, they should on no account whatever be allowed to have any claim to parish allowance.... The infant is, comparatively speaking, of no value to the society,

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as others will immediately supply its place." In the same callous vein he wrote:

> A man who is born into a world already possessed, if he cannot get subsistence from his parents on whom he has a just demand, and if the society do not want his labour, has no claim of *right* to the smallest portion of food, and, in fact, has no business to be where he is. At nature's mighty feast there is no vacant cover for him. She tells him to be gone, and will quickly execute her own orders, if he do not work on the compassion of some of her guests. If these guests get up and make room for him other intruders immediately appear demanding the same favour.... The order and harmony of the feast is disturbed, the plenty that before reigned is changed into scarcity.... The guests learn too late their error, in counteracting those strict orders to all intruders, issued by the great mistress of the feast, who, wishing that all her guests should have plenty, and knowing that she could not provide for unlimited numbers, humanely refused to admit fresh comers when her table was already full.

This infamous passage, like the one quoted before it, was removed from later editions of the *Essay*. But the basic idea that it reflected—the claim that the poor were not entitled to the smallest portion of relief, and that any attempt to invite them to the "mighty feast" against the will of its "mistress" (who represented natural law) would only come to grief—remained the central ideological thrust of the *Second Essay* throughout its numerous editions. "We cannot, in the nature of things, " Malthus wrote, "assist the poor, in any way, without enabling them to rear up to manhood a greater number of their children." The essence of the Malthusian doctrine, Marx observed in 1844, was that "charity ... itself fostered social evils." The very poverty that "formerly was attributed to a *deficiency of charity* was now ascribed to the *superabundance of charity*."

One of the harsher implications of Malthus' argument from its inception was that since there were limits to the means of subsistence for maintaining workers in any given period, any attempt to raise wages in general would only result in a rise of prices for this limited stock of provisions—it could not procure for the workers a larger portion of the necessities of life. This erroneous doctrine—which in its more sophisticated versions became known as the "wages fund doctrine"—was then used to argue that improvement in the general conditions of workers by such means as trade union organization was impossible.

Marx was therefore perfectly justified when he wrote that "what characterises Malthus is the *fundamental meanness* of his outlook." Moreover, for Marx this meanness had a definite

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source. Fighting on behalf of the working classes against Malthusianism and its attacks on the poor, William Cobbett leveled the fiery accusation of "*Parson!*" against Malthus in 1819—an accusation of both class domination and narrow-minded moralistic subservience to the doctrine of the established Protestant church. In Cobbett's own words, "I have, during my life, detested many men; but never any one so much as you.... No assemblage of words can give an appropriate designation of you; and, therefore, as being the single word which best suits the character of such a man, I call you *Parson*, which amongst other meanings, includes that of Borough-monger Tool." Marx in *Capital* was later to pick up this criticism, pointing out that discussions of population in Britain had come to be dominated by Protestant parsons or "reverend scribblers," such as Robert Wallace, Joseph Townsend, Thomas Chalmers and Malthus himself. It was the recognized task of such "parson naturalists" in the days before Darwin to provide natural law justifications for the established order. Malthus, as Marx observed, was lauded by an English oligarchy frightened by the revolutionary stirrings on the Continent, for his role as "the great destroyer of all hankerings after a progressive development of humanity."

Nowhere perhaps were these narrow, parsonian values more evident than in Malthus' view of women's indiscretions. Thus he sought to justify the double standard imposed on women who were "driven from society for an offence ['A breach of chastity' outside of marriage, especially if resulting in an illegitimate birth] which men commit nearly with impunity" on the grounds that it was "the most obvious and effectual method of preventing the frequent recurrence of a serious inconvenience to the community."

In attacking the English Poor Laws Malthus argued that while limitations in the growth of food impeded the growth of population, society could exist under either low equilibrium, relatively egalitarian conditions, as in China, where population had been "forced" to such an extent that virtually everyone was reduced to near starvation, or it could exist under high equilibrium conditions, such as pertained in England, where the aristocracy, gentry and middle class were able to enjoy nature's "mighty feast"—though only if the poor were kept away—and where checks short of universal famine (and short of such

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practices as "exposure of infants") kept population down. His greatest fear—which he helped to instill in the oligarchy of Britain—was that as a result of excessive population growth combined with egalitarian notions "the middle classes of society would ... be blended with the poor."

Such Malthusian fears (and the capitalist need to maintain a high rate of exploitation, i.e., the relative impoverishment of the masses) lay behind the eventual passage of the New Poor Law of 1834, which was aimed at ensuring that workers and the poor would look on exploitation in the workplace and even the prospect of slow starvation as in many ways preferable to seeking relief through the Poor Laws. Malthus responded to the issue of hunger and destitution in Ireland by arguing in a letter to Ricardo in August 1817 that the first object should not be provisions for the relief of the poor but the dispossession of the peasantry: "the *Land* in Ireland is infinitely more populated than in England; and to give full effect to the natural resources of the country, a great part of the population should be swept from the soil into large manufacturing and commercial Towns."

One reason for the hatred that Cobbett and working class radicals directed against Malthus had to do with the fact that Malthus' influence was so pervasive that it was not simply confined to middle-class reformers like John Stuart Mill, but even extended into the ranks of working-class thinkers and activists such as Francis Place. For Place, who adopted the Malthusian wages fund theory, birth control became a kind of substitute for class organization—though this was conceived by Place as being not in the interests of capital, but, in his misguided way, in the interests of the working class. The Malthusian ideology thus served from the first to disorganize the working-class opposition to capital.

It was because of this ideological service for the prevailing interests that, as Schumpeter said, "the teaching of Malthus' *Essay* became firmly entrenched in the system of economic orthodoxy of the time in spite of the fact that it should have been, and in a sense was, recognized as fundamentally untenable or worthless by 1803 and that further reasons for so considering it were speedily forthcoming." With the acknowledgement of moral restraint as a factor Malthus did not so much improve his theory, as Schumpeter further noted, as carry out an "orderly retreat with the artillery lost."

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More and more it was recognized that, as Marx stated, "overpopulation is ... a historically determined relation, in no way determined by abstract numbers or by the absolute limit of the productivity of the necessaries of life, but by the limits posited rather by *specific conditions of production*.... How small do the numbers which meant overpopulation for the Athenians appear to us!" For Marx, it was "the historic laws of the movement of population, which are indeed the history of the nature of humanity, the *natural* laws, but natural laws of humanity only at a specific historic development" which were relevant. In contrast, "Malthusian man, abstracted from historically determined man, exists only in his brain." As Paul Burkett has shown, Marx's own political-economic analysis was to point to an inverse relation between workers' wages and living conditions, on the one hand, and population growth, on the other—underscoring the kinds of relations that are now associated with demographic transition theory.

Social Darwinism

But while Malthus' doctrine became increasingly insupportable on rational and empirical grounds, it received an added boost in 1859 as a result of the publication of Darwin's *Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection.* In chapter three of his book, entitled "The Struggle for Existence," Darwin wrote,

> A struggle for existence inevitably follows from the high rate at which all organic beings tend to increase. Every being which during its natural lifetime produces several eggs or seeds, must suffer destruction during some period of its life, and during some season or occasional year, otherwise, on the principle of geometrical increase, its numbers would quickly become so inordinately great that no country could support the product. Hence, as more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with the individuals of distinct species, or with the physical conditions of life. It is the doctrine of Malthus applied with manifold force to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms; for in this case there can be no artificial increase of food, and no prudential restraint from marriage.

Shortly after returning from his memorable five-year voyage on the HMS *Beagle*, Darwin, in 1837, had opened up his first notebook on what was then called the "transmutation of species." In October 1838, as he later recounted in his *Autobiography*,

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I happened to read for amusement Malthus on *Population*, and being well prepared to appreciate the struggle for existence which everywhere goes on from long-continued observation of the habits of animals and plants, it at once struck me that under these circumstances favourable variations would tend to be preserved, and unfavourable ones to be destroyed. The result of this would be the formation of new species. Here, then, I had at last got a theory by which to work.

Darwin's claim to have derived inspiration from Malthus' *Essay on Population* in developing the crucial notion of the "struggle for existence," which was to underlie his theory of natural selection, was not missed by contemporary social theorists. For Marx it was significant that Darwin had himself (unknowingly) refuted Malthus by means of natural history. Thus in *Theories of Surplus Value* Marx wrote: "In his splendid work, *Darwin* did not realise that by discovering the 'geometrical' progression in the animal and plant kingdom, he *overthrew* Malthus's theory. Malthus's theory is based on the fact that he set Wallace's geometrical progression of man against the chimerical 'arithmetical' progression of animals and plants." A year later Marx wrote in a letter to Engels:

As regards Darwin, whom I have looked at again, it amuses me that he says he applies the "Malthusian" theory *also* to plants and animals, as if Malthus's whole point did not consist in the fact that his theory is applied *not* to plants and animals but only to human beings—in geometrical progression—as opposed to plants and animals. It is remarkable that Darwin recognises among brutes and plants his English society with its division of labour, competition, opening up of new markets, "inventions" and Malthusian "struggle for existence." It is Hobbes' *bellum omnium contra omnes.*

Marx himself did not dispute the general accuracy of Darwin's theory of natural selection, but clearly relished the irony of Darwin's discovery of bourgeois society "among brutes and plants." What was illegitimate from a Marxist standpoint was the attempt, as Engels wrote in the *Dialectics of Nature*, "to transfer these theories back again from natural history to the history of society ... as eternal natural laws of society."

This, however, is exactly what happened with the advent of the broad group of eclectic "theories" that we commonly classify as "social Darwinist"—but which had little in fact to do with Darwinism. These theories drew directly on Malthus, Harriet Martineau, Herbert Spencer, and various nineteenth-century racist thinkers (whose views were anathemas to Darwinism properly understood). In the United States the leading aca-

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demic social Darwinist was William Graham Sumner who argued that, "The millionaires are a product of natural selection." This was simply Malthus, refurbished with the help of the Darwinian-Spencerian lexicon, and used to justify race and class inequality. Needless to say, this view was extremely attractive to the likes of such robber barons as John D. Rockefeller, James J. Hill and Andrew Carnegie. Rockefeller told a Sunday school class that "the growth of a large business is merely a survival of the fittest ... merely the working out of a law of nature and a law of God." Internationally social Darwinism was used to justify the imperialist policy of mass violence and annihilation succinctly summed by Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*—"exterminate all the brutes."[3]

This general type of outlook is still prevalent within mainstream ideology, evident in the work of such influential establishment defenders as sociologist Charles Murray, author of the influential Reaganite tract, *Losing Ground* (a Malthusian-style attack on the welfare state), and coauthor (together with Richard Hernstein) of the no less influential work *The Bell Curve* (a psudoscientific, racist attempt to resurrect the old idea of a racial hierarchy in mental capacity—in order to attack affirmative action programs). What Marx called the "fundamental meanness" of Malthus' doctrine has thus been carried forward into the present, and given a more racial overtone.

Neo-Malthusianism

But it is in the wider realm of ecological theory—linked to a strategy of international domination—that Malthus has his greatest and most direct impact today. In the late 1940s Malthus' long-dormant population theory was resurrected as part of new hegemonic ideology of imperial control—central to both the Cold War and the Green Revolution. A key role here was played by the wealthy Osborn family in the United States. Henry Fairfield Osborn of the American Museum of Natural History was one of the leading proponents of scientific racism and eugenics in the United States in the early part of the century. His nephew, financier Frederick Osborn, subsidized the International Congress on Eugenics (when his uncle was president), and was a key figure in the development of modern demographic policy, in conjunction with his wealthy colleagues in the Rockefeller Foundation and Milibank Fund. By the late 1940s open advo-

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cacy of racist views and eugenics lost much of its respectability as a result of the Holocaust. Nevertheless the general outlook persisted in more circumspect form, and was given renewed respectability by the likes of Henry Fairfield Osborn's son, Henry Fairfield Osborn Jr., who wrote under the name of Fairfield Osborn, and who authored the best-selling ecological study *Our Plundered Planet* (1948). Fairfield Osborn rejected the explicit scientific racism of his father, turning instead directly to Malthus (with his more innocuous attacks on the poor and overpopulating masses). "Shades of Dr. Malthus! He was not so far wrong," Osborn wrote in neo-Malthusian rather than classical Malthusian terms, "when he postulated that the increase in population tends to exceed the ability of the earth to support it." Fairfield Osborn's close associate, William Vogt, head of the Conservation Section of the Pan American Union, and author of the neo-Malthusian tract *The Road to Survival* (1948), was more explicit. Vogt argued that "one of the greatest national assets of Chile, perhaps the greatest asset, is its high death rate." And in an infamous passage entitled "The Dangerous Doctor" he declared:

> The modern medical profession, still framing its ethics on the dubious statements of an ignorant man [Hippocrates] who lived more than two thousand years ago ... continues to believe it has a duty to keep alive as many people as possible. In many parts of the world doctors apply their intelligence to one aspect of man's welfare—survival—and deny their moral right to apply it to the problem as a whole. Through medical care and improved sanitation they are responsible for more millions living more years in increasing misery. Their refusal to consider their responsibility in these matters does not seem to them to compromise their intellectual integrity.... They set the stage for disaster; then, like Pilate, they wash their hands of the consequences.

Through the Rockefeller Foundation and later the Ford Foundation, as Eric Ross has explained, neo-Malthusianism was integrated into U.S. policy, first in response to the Chinese revolution, and then as part of a more deliberate policy of counterrevolution in the countryside (a new period of primitive accumulation) under the rubric of the Green revolution.[4] In 1948, Princeton's neo-Malthusian ideologue Frank Notestein, who had been patronized by Frederick Osborn, was sent to China (where the Rockefeller family had extensive business interests) on behalf of the Rockefeller Foundation. He reported back that overpopulation was the chief reason for the revolution, which could be combated more effectively through con-

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traception than land reform. It was quickly recognized, however, that a more drastic approach was needed. And during the years that Robert McNamara was president of the World Bank, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation launched the Green Revolution, the commercialization of land in the third world using the model of U.S. agribusiness—a ruthless form of "land reform" (i.e., land expropriation) which was legitimated by reference to Malthusian population tendencies.

By the late 1960s, with the development of the ecological movement, this emphasis on overpopulation came to be the main explanation for not only hunger in the third world, but all ecological problems (in a manner prefigured by Osborn and Vogt). Paul Ehrlich, the author of the best selling *Population Bomb* (1968), was to credit Vogt as the initial source for his interest in the population issue. The eugenicist Garrett Hardin, who became renowned within contemporary environmentalism for his article "The Tragedy of the Commons" and for his advocacy of "Lifeboat Ethics," penned a piece "To Malthus" in 1969 in which he wrote,

> Malthus! Thou shouldst be living in this hour:
> The world hath need for thee: getting and begetting,
> We soil fair Nature's bounty

This resurrection of Malthus as an ecologist was an attempt to give ecology a conservative, pro-capitalist rather than revolutionary character, and required that Malthus' actual argument be ignored. This was the same Malthus who had made a point of emphasizing that his argument did not have to do with the eventual overstocking of the earth with inhabitants but rather with the *constant* pressure of population on food supply (true throughout history); who had avoided the term "overpopulation" which made no sense within his strict equilibrium model; who was adamantly opposed to the use of contraceptives; who was the principal advocate within classical economics of the idea that the earth or soil was a "gift of nature to man"; who in contrast to James Anderson in his own day had made no mention of the degradation of the soil; who subscribed to the view (enunciated by David Ricardo) that the powers of the soil were "indestructible"; and who said that the peasantry should be "swept from the soil." In spite (or in ignorance) of all of this Malthus was gradually converted, in neo-Malthusian thought,

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into an "ecological" thinker—the fountainhead of all wisdom in relation to the earth.

Malthus, we are frequently told, emphasized the scarcity of resources on earth and the limitations of human carrying capacity throughout his argument. Yet this flies in the face of the arguments of the real Malthus who wrote in his *Essay on Population* that "raw materials" in contrast to food "are in great plenty" and "a demand ... will not fail to create them in as great a quantity as they are wanted." Malthus, in contrast to Marx, had failed to take note of Lucretius' materialist maxim "*nil posse creari de nihilo,*" out of nothing, nothing can be created. Nor did Malthus escape the pre-Darwinian notion that the capacity of organic life to change and "improve" was extremely limited. As Loren Eisely observed: "It is perhaps worth noting, since the biological observations of Malthus are little commented upon, that he recognized like so many others, the effects of selective breeding in altering the appearance of plants and animals, but regarded such alterations of form as occurring within admittedly ill-defined limits."

There can be little doubt that the real aim of this neo-Malthusian resurrection of Malthus, then, was to resurrect what was after all the chief thrust of the Malthusian ideology from the outset: that all of the crucial problems of bourgeois society and indeed of the world could be traced to overprocreation on the part of the poor, and that attempts to aid the poor directly would, given their innate tendency to vice and misery, only make things worse. As Hardin put it in his essay, "Lifeboat Ethics: The Case Against Helping the Poor," any attempt to open up international granaries to the world population or to relax immigration restrictions in the rich countries would only create a situation where: "The less provident and less able will multiply at the expense of the abler and more provident, bringing eventual ruin upon all who share in the commons." Charity for the poor would not help the poor, he argued, but would only hurt the rich.

For neo-Malthusians of this sort, like Malthus before them, the future improvement of society was therefore impossible, except in the form of the accumulation of wealth among the well-to-do. Malthus—himself an eighteenth-century Parson—would have fully understood the Vicar of Wakefield's observation that, "the very laws of a country may contribute to the

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accumulation of wealth; as when those natural ties that bind the rich and poor together are divided." But he would have disagreed with the Vicar's (i.e., Goldsmith's) anti-acquisitive and paternalistic philosophy, believing instead that the rich and poor are naturally opposed, and that the rich ought to concern themselves simply with their own aggrandizement. Over the last 200 years Malthusianism has thus always served the interests of those who represented the most barbaric tendencies within bourgeois society.

All of this is not to deny that there are radical, even revolutionary ecologists who have drawn inspiration from Malthus (though in this respect they are well-deceived). Nor is it to deny that population growth is one of the most serious problems of the contemporary age. But demographic change cannot be treated in natural law terms but only in relation to changing historical conditions. The demographic transition theory, which emphasizes the way in which population growth depends on economic and social well-being, is therefore a more reliable guide to these issues than Malthusianism. Even famines cannot be explained in terms of a shortage of food in relation to population, as Amartya Sen has definitively demonstrated, but in each and every case arises as a result of differential "entitlement" emanating from the nature of the capitalist market economy. Where threats to the integrity of the biosphere as we know it are concerned, it is well to remember that it is not the areas of the world that have the highest rate of population growth but the areas of the world that have the highest accumulation of capital, and where economic and ecological waste has become a way of life, that constitute the greatest danger.

The Necessity of Malthus

As Marx wrote, "The hatred of the English working class for Malthus—the 'mountebank-parson,' as Cobbett *rudely* called him ... —was thus fully justified and the people's instinct was correct here, in that they felt that he was no *man of science,* but a *bought advocate* of their opponents, a shameless sycophant of the ruling classes." Although Marx has been criticized for the intemperance of his remarks with respect to Malthus, a close examination of both Malthus' ideas and the subsequent development of Malthusianism in both its social Darwinist and neo-Malthusian phases can hardly produce any other conclusion.

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(It is no doubt for this reason that supporters of Malthus rarely examine his ideas closely—at least in public). Malthus represents the class morality (and the race and gender morality) of the capitalist system and in this sense Malthusianism is a historic necessity of capitalism. To censure Malthus, then, is not enough; it is also necessary to censure the system which brought him into being and which, through its own actions, perpetuates his memory.

NOTES

Most citations contained in the original text of this article have been removed. For a complete set of notes please contact Kira Brunner at *Monthly Review.*

1. Ted Benton, "Marxism and Natural Limits," *New Left Review,* no. 178 (November-December 1989), pp. 58-59, 82. In referring to Malthus as an "epistemic conservative" Benton accepts at his word Malthus' early rhetorical claim that he found the utopian visions of society offered by Condorcet and Godwin attractive, but was forced to reject them as incompatible with the human condition on earth (a rhetorical device common in Malthus' time). Given the nature of Malthus' class alliances and the character of his work as a whole it is clear that Malthus was being disingenuous here. He was an early ideologue of capitalism, not a disappointed representative of revolutionary Enlightenment thinking. For a critique of Benton see Paul Burkett, "A Critique of Neo-Malthusian Marxism: Society, Nature and Population," *Historical Materialism,* no. 2 (Summer 1998), pp. 118-42. For a reply to the charge of Prometheanism see John Bellamy Foster, "Marx and the Environment," in Ellen Meiksins Wood and John Bellamy Foster, ed., *In Defense of History* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997), pp. 149-62.
2. Malthus was very consistent in avoiding references to the overpopulation of the earth in the modern sense, even correcting those few passages in his work where he had inadvertently left the impression that human population had surpassed the means of subsistence, changing this to "easy means of subsistence." See Edwin Cannan, *A History of Theories of Production and Distribution in English Political Economy from 1776 to 1848* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1917), p. 108.
3. See Sven Lindqvist, *Exterminate All the Brutes* (New York: The New Press, 1996).
4. Eric B. Ross, "Malthusianism, Counter-revolution and the Green Revolution," *Organization & Environment,* vol. 12, no. 1 (December 1998), pp. 446-450.

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"MUSLIM" WOMEN AND "WESTERN" FEMINISTS: THE DEBATE ON PARTICULARS AND UNIVERSALS

by SHAHRZAD MOJAB

In the last two decades, a host of theoretical positions—cultural relativism, identity politics, postmodernism—have emphasized the *differences* that divide human beings and cultures. For these particularist theories, commonality, solidarity, and internationalism represent "grand narratives," "universalism," "totalization," or "essentialism," all of which are, it seems, inherently oppressive, Eurocentric, and imperialist. Politically, these types of particularism imply either passivism or fragmented and localized micro-initiatives.

My purpose here is to challenge the theory and politics of particularism by examining its approach to gender relations in the Islamic Republic of Iran. This example will illustrate how, now that women's organized resistance against patriarchal oppression is spreading throughout the world, particularists are damaging the cause of women's emancipation by overemphasizing the uniqueness and localism of each and every feminist movement, and opening up great divides among women according to their religion, ethnicity, race, nationality, culture, and geographic location. This politics, of course, denies the universal significance of the theoretical and practical gains won by two centuries of feminist movements in the West. But, in the guise of respect for other cultures, it also inescapably endorses

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the suppression of women's demands for freedom and their subordination to the imperatives of religious, ethnic, and national traditions of patriarchy.

The Construction of the Muslim Woman

The consequences of this particularistic approach can be illustrated by looking at one important aspect of women's lives in Islamic societies, the covering of their bodies, which has been a major locus of male and state power in these societies.[1] The veil has been not only a symbol of male domination and state power but a site of theoretical and political struggles within the feminist movements and women's studies. Many feminists in the West, of course, regard the veil as an oppressive manifestation of patriarchal domination. But some postmodern feminists, or what I am calling particularists, sometimes defend the use of veiling as an authentic expression of a particular culture and the "lived experience" of Muslim women, denouncing critics of the veil as "Eurocentric" and imperialist.[2] So let us consider what is involved in the particularist view that Western critics of the veil are denying the integrity of Islamic culture as well as the "lived experience" and agency of Muslim women.

The first problem is the very idea of "Muslim women." Postmodernist relativists reject dichotomies or "binary oppositions" such as universal versus particular, yet their own theories are often based on just such mechanistic and simplistic oppositions. For instance, those who attack the critics of the veil on the grounds that they deny the "lived experience" and agency of "Muslim women" are taking an extremely diverse population of women and turning it into a single category. The notion "Muslim women" ignores the heterogeneity of women in Islamic societies and constructs them into a universal category shaped by one particular characteristic, a common religion, Islam. The imagined Muslim woman is so unique that she cannot share anything—demands, rights, politics, ideals—with Western women. Differences are turned into a universal and unbridgeable divide. This universalization of difference produces two separate types of human beings, and two women's movements. As Kipling said, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.

But the history of "Muslim women" and the veil presents a much more complicated picture than this simple dichotomy

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suggests. Covering the female body is a major component of the exercise of power by Islamic theocracies, from Iran to Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia. In Iran, for instance, this symbol of male domination has been central to the state power of the theocratic regime which replaced the Pahlavi monarchy in 1979. The control of women, who had emerged as a new social force demanding the democratization of gender relations, had been essential to the state-building projects of the monarchy (1925-79). When that monarchy was overthrown, women, mostly urban but both religious and secular, actively participated in the revolution, although they were by no means united in their vision of the future state and society. When Muslim leaders led by Ayatollah Khomeini assumed state power in Iran in February 1979, immediately initiating a project of Islamizing the state and society, women were the main vehicle and target of Islamization. Not surprisingly, the first Islamization measure was Khomeini's call on women (March 6, 1979) to put on the Islamic veil. Equally significant, the first major resistance to the Islamic regime erupted on March 8, International Women's Day, when tens of thousands of women and men marched against the imposing of veiling.

The veil has had multiple and changing meanings throughout history. One of the myths about veiling is that it is worn by the majority of Muslim women. It is often ignored, both in the West and in Iran, that most women, Muslims and non-Muslims, have never put the Islamic veil on their faces and bodies. Women, with and without the cover, lived side by side for centuries, and the clergy either failed or did not care to impose it on all women.

The covering of women's body became thoroughly politicized when the first Pahlavi monarch, Reza Shah (1925-41), unleashed a modernization campaign, and used coercion in order to unveil women in 1936. Contrary to widespread claims, the majority of women were not wearing the veil when the government launched the unveiling campaign. Confidential documents of the Pahlavi state, recently published by the Islamic government, reveal that women in rural and tribal areas, forming about eighty percent of the population, did not need to be unveiled because they never used the cover in the first place.[3] The last Pahlavi monarch adopted a more relaxed policy about (un)covering women's bodies. By the time the Islamic

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regime came to power in 1979, the majority of Iranian women were, as in the past, non-veiled.

It is not difficult, then, to see that an essential "Muslim woman" at home in her veil is largely a construction of relativists and Islamic ideologists. Ignoring the history of veiling in Iran, they take the lived experience of the veiled women who have constituted only a minority and universalize it into the experience of all Muslim women.

Just as Reza Shah forcibly removed the veil, the Islamic state has used extreme forms of coercion in order to impose it on all women, Muslim and non-Muslim. Disciplining the woman's body through dress codes is now a priority of the state inside and outside Iran. Using diplomatic power, the Islamic regime promotes the veil globally, from the Olympic games to UNESCO. Imposed through state violence, the veil has turned into a means of sexual apartheid. If the use of hijab (head cover for women) signified anti-monarchist action for some Muslim women in 1979 Iran, today resistance to theocratic despotism takes the form of refusing the veil.

It is true that in Turkey, Egypt, or Algeria veiling is, for some women, one site of resistance against the secular state, but particularists confuse this anti-state struggle with resistance to patriarchy. By contrast, state-imposed veiling in Iran is clearly an instrument of sexual apartheid, and feminine, if not feminist, consciousness is expressed in resistance against it. The Islamic state has developed a whole discourse of repression, which identifies various levels of violation of the official codes of covering the body: bi-hijabi (non-veiling), nim-hijabi (half-veiling), and bad-hijabi (improper veiling). Each form of resistance invites a certain level of punishment—physical, financial, social, and psychological. Women defy the state by violating all the official dress codes including a ban on bright colors, the use of buttons, and the official shape of the veil.

There has, in fact, been a long tradition of struggle against the body cover, which is rooted in more than a century of democratic revolutionary movements. In the mid-nineteenth century, for example, the Babi movement called for the reform of religion and of the harsh treatment of women. One of the leaders, the female poet Tahereh Qurrat al-Ain who lived in 1814-1854, discarded the veil.[4] Although the movement was brutally suppressed, it continued to influence many intellectu-

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als who "wrote against women's subjugation in family and society and condemned the practice of veiling."[5] Women participated in the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911, which aimed at the establishment of a democratic and independent political system. Some of the targets of the women's liberation movement of the early twentieth century were veiling, polygyny, and restrictions against women's right to education. By the early 1920s, the Iranian poet Mirzade-ye Eshqi (1894-1924), in one of his best known poems, "The Black Shroud" ("kafan-e siyah"), denounced the chador.

There is, in fact, no single universal Islamic view on strict dress codes and sexual segregation. Many theologians, religious leaders, and whole Islamic movements reject such codes. Even the Iran Liberation Movement, whose late leader, Mehdi Bazargan, became the first prime minister of the Islamic Republic, advocates a much more relaxed regulation of gender relations. Faced with persistent resistance against the veil, even some of the factions sharing power in the government choose not to strictly implement dress codes.

Moreover, the country is religiously heterogeneous. The dominant religion, Islam, itself is not homogeneous. Most of the Kurds, the Baluch people, the Turkmans, and some populations along the Persian Gulf are Sunni Muslims of different denominations. There are also minorities such as Baha'is, Isma'ilis, and Ahl-e Haqq who distinguish themselves from the Muslims and whose religions are not recognized by the state. Even the official brand of Islam, the Twelver Imam Shi'ism, is not unified as we can readily see from the suppression of the clergymen who are labeled as believers in liberal or American Islam.

The category "Muslim women" constructs a unidimensional woman whose consciousness or identity is shaped by one factor only—religion. An Iranian woman's identity is, however, a changing mix of nationality (Baluch, Kurd, Persian, Turk, etc.), ethnicity (Armenian, Assyrian, Jew, etc.), religion (Baha'i, Christianity, Islam, etc.), language (Arabic, Baluchi, Kurdish, Persian, Turkish, etc.), social class (based on sharp socio-economic cleavages), urban/rural background, education (in a half-illiterate society), political affiliation, physical shape, culture, and so on. The universalization of religion as the determining factor in the identity of Iranian women is, obviously,

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consistent with the policy and practice of the Islamic state, and shares the the so-called Orientalist world view, a view adopted by many Western commentators which, among other things, depicts the world's Muslim population as obedient followers of their religion. It is as if societies and women of the West were identified as simply "Christian."

By universalizing the culture of a minority, anthropologists such as Homa Hoodfar and Patricia Higgins ironically deny the authenticity of the culture of non-veiling practiced by the majority of Iranian women, the culture of anti-veiling, the feminist and secular traditions of Iranians, and ignore the demands of non-Muslim Iranians.

And, finally, to create a particular Muslim woman by universalizing the culture of a minority is not only empirically and theoretically untenable but also politically questionable. It means remaining silent about the anti-democratic nature of forced veiling and other restrictions on non-Muslim women, who together with men are treated as *zimmi* in the laws of the Islamic Republic. Under conditions of legal and coercive imposition by the Islamic state, veiling cannot be reduced to a cultural expression.[6] It is, rather, an integral part of the exercise of power by a misogynist theocratic state.

Constructing Western Feminism as the Adversary

Particularists single out the differences between Muslim and Western women and universalize them into a great divide. Most colonialists, travellers, and other Westerners who have visited Islamic countries have contrasted the segregation and subordination of the Muslim woman with the integrated or liberated Western women. Today, feminist anthropologists such as Patricia Higgins, an American specializing in Iranian culture, deny the legitimacy of any comparison between the two cases. Her views are succinctly stated in her review of the book *Going to Iran* (1982) by Kate Millett, an internationalist feminist who was convinced of the contemporary universality of patriarchy and of the need for a women's movement that ignores national boundaries.[7]

Millett is criticized for treating equal education, equal pay, equal opportunity, access to abortion, contraception, sex education, and childcare facilities as the universal minimal conditions of sexual equality. Higgins argues that Millet was

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proposing a model for sexual equality which was Western and could not apply to Iran or other non-Western cultures. Addressing the question Millett had raised in her book, "How can we help [the women of Iran]?," Higgins answered: Perhaps we cannot.[8]

But the demands that Higgins treats as particularly Western have been on the agenda of Iranian women throughout the twentieth century. It is indeed difficult to imagine how working women, often ruthlessly exploited, in Iran or in any other society would *not* demand equal pay, equal opportunity, or childcare facilities. Even if childcare facilities emerged first in the West, how is it possible to brand their adoption (and even the need or demand for them) as foreign (Western) when it occurs in the megacities of Tehran, Cairo, or Istanbul? In fact, since Higgins declared contraception to be a Western feminist demand, the Islamic state itself has promoted it.[9]

Particularists not only construct a "Muslim woman" but separate Muslim and Western women by constructing a universal "West" with its own unique women and feminism. The West, like the Muslim woman, is constructed into a monolithic world. There is much talk of the "Western world," the dominant "Western culture," "Western feminists" and how they "construct" "Muslim" women and their use of the veil. For instance, "Western feminists," it is argued, perpetuate racist myths by assuming that veiling is a uniformly oppressive practice. Western feminists, therefore, are supposedly compelling Muslim women to choose between fighting racism and fighting sexism: in order to resist patriarchal oppression, they must accept the superiority of the West.[10]

Several objections to this claim are in order. First, the West is as diverse as any other part of the world. Nor is it appropriate to label all Western critics as clients of colonialism and racism. Such a claim, widely diffused by the Islamic state, is not shared by many Iranian women and men who have been inspired, since the 1789 French revolution, by Western people's struggles for freedom, democracy, and socialism. In North America, for instance, resistance against racism is much more advanced than it is in any Islamic country.[11]

Second, Western feminist criticism of the veil and the sexual apartheid policies of the Islamic regime cannot be equated with the positions of Western states and mainstream

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media. Many feminists are inspired by a deep commitment to the democratization of life, particularly a radical transformation of unequal gender relations. Contrary to particularists, it would be appropriate to criticize the veil even if all Muslim women voluntarily used it. There is nothing sacred about veiling, Islamic or non-Islamic. Indeed, feminists in the West have not outdone Iranian women and men who have denounced the hijab and chador throughout this century.

Third, to claim that Muslim women are, in effect, being forced by "Western feminism" to choose between fighting racism and fighting sexism seriously underestimates their intellectual ability to distinguish between racism/colonialism and feminism. To put it another way, the implication is that Muslim women must reject Western feminism in order to fight their own oppression. This is a mirror image of a major propaganda line promoted by the Islamic state, which equates Western peoples with their governments, and denounces the entire non-Muslim world as either communist or imperialist. That xenophobic policy is highlighted in the official slogan, "Neither the East [communism] nor the West, the Islamic Republic."

But women in Islamic countries do not have to choose between racism and sexism, nor do "Western" criticisms of veiling imply that they do. Relying on Iranian women's experience as well as the rich theory and practice of the world feminist movement, they can resist the racism of both Western states and the media as well as the racism and xenophobia promoted by Islamic leaders. Muslim women can easily discern, for example, the united platform of the Vatican and the Islamic Republic against women's rights.[12]

An Alternative Approach

I have tried to demonstrate that postmodernists/relativists support Islam-based patriarchal gender relations by identifying a sizeable population of the women of the world simply as Muslims, and celebrating their particularism. In doing so, these theorists work, mechanistically, within the framework of the particular/universal dichotomy. Failing to grasp that particularism and universalism are closely intertwined and, at the same time, conflictual, they make arbitrary and ahistorical claims about the uniqueness of Muslim women and their demands for equality and justice.

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In spite of their proclamation of the collapse of binary oppositions such as West and East, tradition and modernity, agency and structure, religious and secular, particularists eliminate, or rather deny, one side of the opposition and celebrate the other.[13] The century-long secular feminist movements in Islamic countries are branded as Western, and Islamic patriarchal relations are hailed as authentic cultural formations.

We can, instead, adopt a dialectical approach which recognizes the individuality and particularity of each woman and each feminist movement, each within its specific historical context, but at the same time acknowledges that, even in their uniqueness, they share common struggles against capitalist and precapitalist patriarchy. We can respect the voluntary choice of any woman to wear the veil, and we can oppose forcible unveiling (e.g., in Iran in 1936-41), yet we can at the same time criticize veiling or any segregation of human beings along sex lines.

To take another example, let us look at the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, issued in 1990 by the Organization of Islamic States. The declaration announced that all rights were subject to Islamic law, and made no provisions for granting women equal rights with men.[14] One commentator has remarked about this document that particularisms such as Islamic claims about gender relations are nothing more than disguises for the universal male determination to cling to power and privilege. Islamic particularism is simply an expression of a universal claim for the subordinate status of women.[15]

Particularist approaches also ignore the unity and conflict of agency/structure by eliminating one side—structure. But agency and structure are inseparable, always united and always in conflict. There is no agency or identity outside the complex web of social-structural relations—relations that are increasingly becoming global while remaining local. At the same time, identity and agency both change and are capable of challenging structural constraints. Muslim women should not be held hostage to their Islamic identity or agency, nor should Western women be confined to their religion, race, or geographic location. Certainly, resisting patriarchy in its Islamic local forms is primarily the project of women and men in Islamic countries. But feminists in the West are also capable of solidarity with the struggle against sexual apartheid practiced in Islamic countries.

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It is obvious that Western feminists themselves have not turned the world upside down. Patriarchy is still in place in Europe and North America, and new forms of male domination emerge and coexist with old traditions of oppression. But feminists in the West have made great strides in democratizing gender relations in the classroom, the workplace, in parliament, even in the church, and in language. These achievements are the result of intellectual and theoretical as well as political resistance to patriarchy. Western feminism is, therefore, in a good position to contribute to the struggle of Muslim women for equality. This has happened, to some extent, since late nineteenth-century women in Islamic societies relied on the experience of Western feminists in their struggle for universal suffrage and other rights. Here is the dialectic of particular and universal: the struggle for suffrage rights and inclusive language—a struggle based on universalistic principles—emerged in particular, Western, feminist movements. Or, to put it another way, the particulars of Western feminist struggles can turn into universals when taken on by other, non-Western, women's movements, just as Western women can draw universal lessons from the particular experience of women elsewhere.

The record of the feminist movement worldwide shows that the struggle for liberation is multidimensional, with numerous platforms and strategies. Moreover, this struggle is intertwined with other movements which aim at the democratization of society—movements of the working classes, ethnic groups, race groups, etc. A dialectical perspective sees unity and solidarity in this diversity. It will not optimistically look for a universal alliance among all human beings. But it assumes that there is no insurmountable divide separating the women of the world. No doubt there are different meanings or expectations of freedom, democracy, and socialism, but alliances can be and are being made among those who share a common understanding of liberation. The world is divided, for example, on who should decide women's reproductive choices. Women unite or divide on this issue regardless of their location or religion. In the Beijing conference, the Vatican and the Islamic Republic united on strategies for the control of women, while women of different cultures, colors, and religious canons united against the conservative front.

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Postmodernism treats universalistic principles as inherently oppressive, even totalitarian. But the equation of the universal and the global with "totalization" or, more particularly, with totalitarianism is at best simplistic. Totalitarianism as a political phenomenon has nothing to do with the scope of generalization. Just as universalistic principles can be liberating, small-scale narratives can be extremely oppressive. Nor is totalitarianism related to size or geography. It can appear in small-size locations such as a family, a court, a classroom, a village, no less than in large-size spaces such as a city, a country or a whole region of the world.

The feminist movement does not become totalitarian simply by forging alliances on the national, regional, or global levels. Such alliances are not incompatible with mutual respect for cultural differences, and the cause of liberation is better served if our practice is not constrained by theoretical positions that fragment and weaken our agency. Stoning a woman to death in Bangladesh should and can be seen as an assault against women everywhere, and it should and can spur us to think and act in North America.

NOTES

1. I use terms like "Islamic societies," "Islamic countries," and "Muslim women" very reluctantly, for reasons that will be clear in what follows. For a similar criticism of this usage, see Sami Zubaida, "Is there a Muslim society? Ernest Gellner's sociology of Islam," *Economy and Society* 24 (2), 1995.
2. See, for example, Homa Hoodfar, "The Veil in Their Minds and on Our Heads: The Persistence of Colonial Images of Muslim Women," *Resources for Feminist Research*, 22 (3/4) 1994.
3. Iran National Archives, *Khoshunat va farhang: Asnad-e mahraman-e-ye kashf-e hejab 1313-1332* (*Violence and culture: Confidential records about the abolition of hijab 1313-1322*). Tehran: Sazman-e Asnad-e Melli-ye Iran, 1992, pp. 47, 48, 240.
4. See, among others, Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 295-331.
5. Janet Afary, "The Debate on Women's Liberation in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911," *Expanding the Boundaries of Women's History: Essays on Women in the Third World* ed. Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Margaret Strobel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 104.
6. The word *zimmi* (the Persian variant of the Arabic *dhimmi*), was used in early Islam to refer to a non-Muslim subject who paid capital tax to the Muslim ruler in exchange for protection and safety. Iranian laws are based on this anti-democratic distinction between Muslims and zimmis. For instance, articles 209 and 210 of the "Islamic Penal Code" clearly distinguish between Muslims and "zimmi infidels" (*kafar-e zimmi*).

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7. Patricia Higgins, review of Kate Millett, *Going to Iran* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1982) in *Signs*, Autumn 1983, p. 155.
8. ibid., p. 156.
9. See, for instance, Homa Hoodfar, "Devices and Desires: Population Policy and Gender Roles in the Islamic Republic," *Middle East Report*, September-October, 1994, pp. 11-17.
10. Hoodfar 1994, p.16.
11. In the West, a rich and growing body of antiracist theory and practice has developed over the decades largely as a result of the struggle of black and native peoples, immigrants, ethnic groups, as well as whites. However, in multinational and multilingual Iranian society where Persian language and culture are official and dominant, non-Persian peoples such as the Turks, Kurds, Arabs, and Jews are subject to harsh racism in both the state sphere and civil society (to the extent that it exists). In a country where only half the people are native speakers of the Persian language, non-Persian peoples are constitutionally denied the right to education in their native languages. The Islamic state has refused to implement Article 15 of its constitution which allows the teaching of the literature of "ethnic and local languages." Racism of the anti-Semitic type, for example, is rampant in modern Persian literature (see Z. Pirnazar, "chehre-ye yahud dar asar-e se nevisande-ye motajadded-e Irani" ("The face of the Jew in the works of three modernist Iranian writers"), *Iran Nameh: A Persian Journal of Iranian Studies*, no. 13 (1995) for a brief survey). My own experience indicates the existence, among Iranian immigrants in North America, of extensive racist attitudes towards Black and Aboriginal peoples. Many Iranians deny the existence of racism within Iranian society.
12. See Michael Bronski, "Pope to Jews, Women, Queers—'Drop Dead'", *Z Magazine*, 1994 pp. 14-17 on the Vatican, Iran, and Beijing Conference.
13. On the collapse of such binary oppositions, see N. Tohidi, "Islamic Feminism: A Democratic Challenge or a Theocratic Reaction," in *Kankash: A Persian Journal of History, Culture, and Politics*, no. 13, (Winter 1977) p. 98.
14. Ann Elizabeth Mayer, "Universal versus Islamic Human Rights: A Clash of Cultures or a Clash with a Construct?" *Michigan Journal of International Law*, Vol. 15, (1994) pp. 307-404.
15. Ann Elizabeth Mayer, "Cultural Particularism as a Bar to Women's Rights: Reflections on the Middle Eastern Experience in Women's Rights," *Human Rights: International Feminist Perspectives*, eds. Julie Peters and Andrea Wolper, (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 185.

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U.S. IMPERIALISM AND 1898

by HOBART SPALDING

Historians generally view 1898 as a key date in United States and world history. The U.S. victory in what they call the Spanish-American War of that year marks the aggressive emergence of Yankee imperialism on the world scene, complete with colonies and an informal empire. Like most dates, 1898 doesn't open or close an era, but represents a year in which significant changes became obvious. Only by looking at events leading up to and immediately after the war does its full significance come into focus. But first we should note that the term Spanish-American War is incorrect. Spain and the United States fought a war, but the Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Filipino people also struggled against Spain and the United States. The conflict, therefore, should be named the Spanish-Cuban-Puerto Rican-Filipino-American War. It is not called this because imperialists cover up the history that they do not want people to know. The material that follows shows some of the reasons why the truth has remained mostly hidden.

After the Civil War ended in 1865, an industrial and financial elite clearly emerged as the most dynamic class in the United States. The economy expanded rapidly and industry began to replace agriculture as the dominant sector. But the economy did not just move steadily upward. Either depression or serious recession marked fully half the years from 1873 to

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1897. These sharp downturns, which to many contemporary observers appeared more and more violent over time, threatened the system's stability. They fueled growing social discontent. In depressions, millions lost jobs or could not find employment. Working people and small farmers responded by forming unions or agrarian organizations, and large-scale urban riots occurred. The late nineteenth century became a time of massive strikes by workers in steel mills, mines, factories, and ports. It was also a time in which medium and small farmers, African-American and white, marched together for their rights. Many contemporaries argued that without an outlet, internal social tensions could only build, leading eventually to class war. As a result, people began actively to look for a way to avoid these cycles. By the 1890s, ruling-class consensus held that sustained U.S. prosperity and the safety of the capitalist system rested on expansion.

Until the Civil War, people saw expansion as a purely continental phenomenon. The natural boundaries of the United Sates lay from the Atlantic to the Pacific (and included Alaska, added in 1867). After the 1860s, two changes occurred. First, people began to enlarge their vision. By 1898 many thought that the U.S. sphere encompassed not only Caribbean islands, but Hawaii, and some places in Asia as well. This represented a huge leap from a continental vision. Second, U.S. foreign policy took a more aggressive tone, displaying a willingness to confront other powers, such as Great Britain, engaged in the race for colonies, empire, and trade.

To expand, the United States needed force to back up its actions or to threaten others into submission. And so, along with expansionism, came the idea of a strong navy. As one U.S. statesman put it, "the man-o'-war precedes the merchantman and impresses primitive peoples." But prior to 1890 the navy remained a disaster and the army numbered only 25 thousand ill-equipped troops. Influential businessmen and members of Congress argued that national prosperity depended upon commercial expansion, which by definition meant conflicts over markets and raw materials. A strong two-ocean navy would provide both defensive and offensive protection. A Central American canal would connect the fleets. The nation needed strategic bases overseas, particularly in the Caribbean to protect any canal. Expansionist Congressmen voted funds to back these

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ideas. In the 1880s and 1890s, the navy was rebuilt and was on its way to becoming equal to even the famed British fleet. Naval power would play a vital role in 1898 and a trans-oceanic canal became one key plank in the expansionist platform. As we know, after creating the Republic of Panama in 1902 by encouraging and supporting a separatist revolt against Colombia, the United States built a canal which opened in 1914.

Having examined the larger context within which the War developed, we now turn to the immediate events preceding it. In 1894, the long simmering war of national liberation against Spain broke out again in Cuba. By early 1898 it had become apparent that the popular forces under the banner of the Partido Revolucionario Cubano (PRC) were gaining the upper hand. The PRC advocated *Cuba Libre*!, Cuba for the Cubans, and opposed both the Spanish colonialists and the local elites who wanted independence, but with a continuation of their social and economic privileges. Clearly the popular struggle represented a class war as well as an anti-colonial and anti-imperialist one.

Gradually, a strong sentiment built in the United States favoring intervention in Cuba. Some looked at the economic side, urging protection for the $50 million and over $100 million of trade with the island. They saw that intervention would provide an easy way for accelerated U.S. economic penetration. Others argued that the United States should come to the rescue of a people fighting for freedom against a decadent European colonial power. The sensationalist press whipped up the public by printing all sorts of atrocity stories about the Spanish, most of them partially or totally untrue. In February 1898 the USS *Maine* sank in Havana harbor with the loss of hundreds of American lives, most of them African-American crew members. The United States then forced Spain's hand with an ultimatum. Faced with this threat, that country fully capitulated. But too late. President William McKinley opened hostilities in April of 1898. As a distinguished Cuban-American historian has written, "ostensibly the war was against Spain, but in fact it was against the Cubans."

The war itself lasted briefly. By Fall 1898 the United States had occupied Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and parts of the Philippines. The Peace of Paris signed in December ratified these gains. Significantly, *no* representatives from the occu-

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pied lands sat at the negotiating table, nor did the United States consult with a single one of them, despite the fact that their national sovereignty lay at stake. The question now became: how would the United States deal with its new captive areas?

To answer that question we need to look at just how the government and expansionists sold the war to the public and why many people supported it, although not every sector of society did, as we will see. Wars and larger socio-economic policies abroad and at home always need rationales. This means appeals to "higher truths" and unrefutable principles. We have discussed the economic arguments, namely the search for markets, raw materials, and investment opportunities. We have also examined the strategic ones centering around the need for a navy and army to protect trade and investment, which in turn meant that the United States would need bases around the world. Canal security indicated that a safe Caribbean would become vital. Duly, shortly after the war, the United States acquired Guantanamo Bay in Cuba and soon built several bases in Puerto Rico, some of which are operative today. Likewise, many argued that if the United States did not act quickly, other imperial powers (Britain, Germany, France, Russia) would occupy key points in the world and monopolize global commerce.

Less tangible arguments also existed. The most powerful centered upon religion, culture, and race. Many thought that the United States had the responsibility to Christianize the world, and to many religious people this meant converting others to Protestantism. And closely related to that came a "civilizing" mission as well. This meant, in a word, Americanization (here we mean the upper class, white Anglo-Saxon Protestant [WASP], capitalist version). In Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, the United States revamped school systems in the desired image. Filipino children who lived in a tropical climate read, for example, about Dick and Jane playing in the snow, and that "A" stood for Apple, a fruit not found locally. Cuban schools taught U.S. history, but not Cuban history. Certainly the U.S. occupiers did not want young Cubans learning about *Cuba Libre*! In Puerto Rico as well they would shape the learning experience of all youngsters to fit the U.S. mold.

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Social Darwinism, a dominant doctrine of the time, taught that those races most advanced (according to the Eurocentric materialist model) were so because of their natural superiority. A Columbia University professor of political science wrote: "the Anglo-Saxon races are entrusted with the mission of conducting the political civilization of the modern world." Such attitudes put forth by elite opinion managers found echo in the form of more blatant and baser racism among the general public and occupying troops.

The question of how to deal with occupied lands elicited much discussion within the United States. Most agreed that the United States should keep the smallest areas such as Puerto Rico, Guam, or Wake Island—the latter seized shortly after the end of the war—as bases, although in the case of Puerto Rico, both strategic and economic considerations entered into the equation.

Cuba and the Philippines, however, proved quite different and became centers of controversy. The United States had officially disclaimed any intention of annexing Cuba. After beating Spain and defeating the popular forces, the United States then set about opening up the economy to U.S. investors and turning the country politically over to local elites. When U.S.-approved candidates lost the first elections, the State Department decided to make the island a protectorate by imposing the Platt Amendment as a condition for independence. The Amendment limited Cuba's ability to borrow or make foreign treaties, and it specifically gave the United States the right to intervene unilaterally any time it decided. Finally, a commercial treaty enmeshed the two economies by opening up trade. Cuba would remain an informal colony of the United States until 1959 when the Revolution finally achieved the goal of *Cuba Libre*!

In the Philippines, the islanders revolted once they realized that the invaders did not intend to leave. The ensuing war lasted four years. In order to quell the desire for freedom on the part of the very people whom they had supposedly come to liberate, the United States used over seventy thousand men, about four times the number fielded during the 1898 conflict. Ironically, more U.S. troops died in this bloody contest than had in 1898. As Congressional testimony revealed, the occupiers regularly used torture, and U.S. soldiers

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under orders from their officers wiped out whole villages of men, women, and children. The My Lai massacre in Vietnam was not just the work of a single crazed U.S. Lieutenant, but one in a long line of atrocities committed by U.S. troops in the Philippines, Haiti, Santo Domingo, and elsewhere. Despite promises of independence, the United States let go of the islands only in 1946.

Not everyone in the United States approved of imperialism. Many working-class people supported Cuba's popular forces. Labor unions, in particular, opposed the war. More than one contemporary labor newspaper pointed out that working men supplied the corpses and paid most of the taxes while the rich got the spoils. African-American soldiers voiced their discomfort at killing Filipinos while defending a racist home country. Nor did they like fighting under white officers who referred to the Filipinos as "niggers." More than one African-American soldier felt this contradiction serious enough to join those fighting against the foreigners. This excerpt form a letter by an African-American soldier stationed in Manila provides evidence: "the Americans ... began to apply home treatment for colored peoples. Curse them [the Filipinos] as damned niggers, steal and ravish them, rob them on the street ... desecrate their church property, and after fighting began, looted everything in sight, burning, robbing the graves."

In late 1898 an Anti-Imperialism League formed in the United States. It called huge demonstrations (over 100 thousand gathered at times) against annexation and occupation. Anti-imperialism became a leading issue of the time. The League failed to secure freedom for Puerto Rico and the Philippines. It provided, however, a precedent for the anti-war and anti-imperialist protests against the Vietnam conflict. Its existence reminds us that anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism have deep roots within U.S. society.

The events of 1898 make the most sense when seen as a part of a larger picture. Within a few decades, the United States had thrust itself upon the scene as a major world power, one that had conquered both a formal and informal empire; and the latter would grow larger in the future. It had acquired either direct or indirect control over Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Philippines, Guam, Wake Island, Panama and the canal, as well as Hawaii. It had restructured and improved its armed forces, and

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particularly its naval power. It had become an important exporter of capital and a leading commercial force in the Americas and elsewhere. In this context, 1898 only provides a convenient date to remember.

In many ways things have changed little in the century since the War. The U.S. empire has grown and changed from direct to mostly indirect control (Puerto Rico and Guam are still exceptions). But military intervention still marks U.S. foreign policy (the Gulf, Granada, Panama—just to cite three recent cases). The press, "sensationalist" and not, still prepares public opinion in the same ways. United States foreign policy still operates on the assumption of U.S. cultural superiority and cultivates an "us" versus "them" mentality. Will this change in the future? Will the United States ever put itself on the side of the self-determination of peoples as it failed to do in the Philippines, Guam, Cuba, or Puerto Rico? Frankly, it cannot do so until the system changes because self determination of peoples, no matter if it occurs in the smallest nation, threatens any system that supports the few that exploit the many.

A Soldier Fallen in the Phillipines (1899)
by William Vaughan Moody

Streets on the roaring town,
Hush for him, hush be still!
He comes, who was stricken down
Doing the world of our will.
Hush! Let him have his state,
Give him his soldier's crown.
The grists of trade can wait
Their grinding at the mill,
But he cannot wait for his honor,
now the trumpet has been blown;
Wreathe pride now for his granite brow,
lay love on his breast of stone.

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Toll! Let the great bells toll
Till the clashing air is dim.
Did we wrong this parted soul?
We will make it up to him.
Toll! Let him never guess
What work we sent him to,
Laurel, laurel, yes;
He did what we bade him do
Praise, and never a whispered hint but
the fright he fought was good;
Never a word that the blood on his sword
was his country's own heart's blood.

A flag for the soldier's bier
Who dies that his land may live;
O, banners, banners here,
That he doubt not nor misgive!
That he heed not from the tomb
The evil days draw near
When the nation, robed in gloom,
With its faithless past shall strive.
Let him never dream that his bullet's scream
went wide of its island mark,
Home to the heart of his darling land where
she stumbled and sinned in the dark.

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AMILCAR CABRAL: AN EXTRACTION FROM THE LITERATURE

by SYLVESTER COHEN

There can be no doubt that Amilcar Cabral is the most original political and revolutionary thinker Africa has produced in modern times. What is often overlooked and less well known is that Cabral was an innovative and important military thinker within the context of Africa and the Third World. The purpose of this essay is to examine and extract through Cabral's writings and related scholarship his key politico-military strategies which enabled him to lead the African Independence Party for the liberation of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands (PAIGC) to victory over the Portuguese colonialists. It is the contention of this study that a successful socialist revolution is unlikely to take place anywhere in Africa without African revolutionaries learning some of the political and military lessons of Amilcar Cabral.

When one realizes the enormous odds against a successful anti-colonial insurgency in Guinea Bissau during the early 1960's the implications for future socialist insurgencies in Africa are positive. Amilcar Cabral led a tiny African coastal enclave of 600,000 people—99 percent illiterate with only fourteen university graduates in the entire country, about two-fifths the size of Portugal—against a modern Portuguese military force considerably larger proportionately than the American expeditionary force in Vietnam during the late 1960's. In addition,

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Portugal had substantial support throughout most of the war (1962-1974) from its NATO allies. NATO was at that time and still is the most powerful military alliance in the world. The PAIGC could not hope, initially, to match materially the resources of the colonial armed forces. But according to Cabral, 'victory in a national liberation struggle is the result of human forces and only secondly of material resources'.[1] Victory would depend first and foremost upon the determination of the people of Guinea and Cape Verde to throw off the colonial yoke.'[2]

Three years after its founding in 1956, the PAIGC organized a strike by dockworkers in Bissau, the capital city. This strike led to the massacre of 50 dockworkers at Pidgiguiti on August 3, 1959. After the massacre, Cabral and his associates decided that the Guineans could not hope to gain independence from the Portuguese through peaceful means. The PAIGC left a small clandestine organization in Bissau and other towns and departed for the countryside to politicize the peasants. For Cabral and his comrades realized that the peasants would have to undergo political mobilization before armed struggle could be conducted successfully.

By political mobilization Cabral meant that the peasantry had to be organized effectively as participants in the many ways necessary to facilitate the national liberation struggle against the Portuguese colonialists. Fortunately, Cabral was uniquely qualified to lead the political mobilization effort among the peasantry in Guinea Bissau. Cabral was a trained agronomist. And in this capacity in 1954, he conducted a countrywide agricultural census under the auspices of the Portuguese colonial regime. This project enabled him to visit all the ethnic groups in every section of the colony. Cabral was able to learn, analyze and assess the various economic systems, customs and traditions of the many different ethnic groups within Guinea Bissau. He was undoubtedly the most knowledgeable person about the colony at the beginning of the armed struggle in 1962. His knowledge gave him a unique advantage in orchestrating the colonial revolution because he understood the realities of Guinea society. Cabral wisely stated, "It is impossible to establish effective armed struggle ... unless we really know our reality" and "start out from our reality to wage the struggle."[3]

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Always the realist, he recognized it would take years to sufficiently explain the realities and need for revolution to a reluctant and skeptical peasantry. True enough, the peasants were the main force in the colony—'a great physical force'—but in 1959 not yet a revolutionary force. In 1960 when Cabral began training cadres (revolutionary political workers) in Conakry to go into Guinea Bissau to politicize and mobilize the peasants he gave the following astute advice:

> Remember always that the people do not fight for ideas, for things that only exist in the heads of individuals. The people fight and they accept the necessary sacrifices. But they do it in order to gain material advantages, to live in peace and to improve their lives, to experience progress, and to be able to guarantee a future to their children.[4]

Cabral would rehearse the cadres sometimes as much as 'several times' in the proper way to contact the elders (homens grandes) in the villages.[5] Even the arguments to use with the elders were selected during these simulated exercises.[6] According to the PAIGC's political worker, Antonio Bana:

> Before going into a village to meet the elder, we asked for information about him. You had to be very careful. You found out about his everyday life, his standing in the village, his relations with the Portuguese....[7]

The political mobilization process involved hundreds of meetings and discussions with the village elders and peasants. Cabral had the cadres facilitate discussions on all matters relevant to the national liberation struggle with the villagers. This was the preparatory work necessary to mobilize the rural population for participation in the armed struggle. Probably the greatest asset Cabral had during this period was patience. For he realized that painstaking patience and preparation were essential elements of a successful revolution. In 1960 Cabral and the PAIGC was 'roundly criticized' by the great African revolutionary theorist Frantz Fanon for not plunging right away into war in Guinea Bissau.[8] Cabral stated his position on the matter as follows:

> It is better to begin the armed struggle with an apparent delay, but with guarantees of being able to continue, than to start at some premature moment, before we have established all the conditions to ensure its continuity and victory for our people.[9]

Cabral understood the realities of Guinea Bissau better than Fanon and wisely waited until 1962 to begin the war of national liberation. 'On the night of June 30-July 1, 1962, a

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series of sabotage raids was carried out from bases in Guinea.'[10] In his study of the colonial guerrilla war the revolutionary expert Dr. Gerard Chaliand states that:

> In August and September 1962, the fourth conference of Party cadres convened in Conakry and decided to expand the armed struggle at all costs. So it came about that by January 1963 a broad guerrilla campaign had been launched in the southern half of the country.[11]

According to Dr. Jock McColloch, Cabral used 'a centrifugal strategy, the guerrillas moved from the middle towards the periphery as the struggle gathered momentum'. This strategy was a major innovation which had the benefit of catching the Portuguese completely unaware.[12] Since the initial sabotage raids came from bases in the Republic of Guinea the Portuguese obviously felt the guerrillas would operate out of that nation or Senegal which also seemed an attractive sanctuary for the insurgents.

To Cabral all military activities and actions were to further the political objectives of the war[13] which were the liberation of Guinea Bissau and the building of a socialist society. Toward this end all members of the armed forces were made members of the party (PAIGC). This was an innovation atypical of socialist revolutions outside Africa.

Early on in the military conflict with the Portuguese colonialists some PAIGC commanders degenerated into warlordism, using their positions for personal aggrandizement. At the Cassaca Congress in 1964 those PAIGC cadres found guilty of abusing their authority were banished, incarcerated, or eliminated—depending on the gravity of their crimes.[14] The actions taken at the Cassaca Congress enabled Cabral to establish the supremacy of the party over the military. The lines of authority were firmly organized from Cabral and the executive leadership down to the combatants in the field. Cabral asserted that "every combatant must have {a} twofold discipline: he must have the discipline of a conscientious militant of our party and the military discipline of a member of our armed forces."[15]

The fact that the political struggle was paramount over the military struggle was never allowed to be forgotten by anyone in the liberation movement. The eminent British historian Basil Davidson best summarized how this was done when he said:

> Political commissars were found to be indispensable, and were appointed alongside commanders at every level of organization. The need for them

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was both tactical and strategic. It was tactical because successful units in a liberation war had to be highly democratic units. Such units were composed of volunteers, never conscripts ..., whose motives were primarily political and whose morale and effectiveness depended, invariably, on ... well-conducted discussion.[16]

In addition the commissars looked after the welfare of the armed militants and secured food supplies.[17] Cabral innovatively had the commissars oversee the cultivation of fields by the combatants during lulls in fighting activities. Also, whenever possible, the guerrillas were expected to help the peasants, under the watchful eye of the commissar, cultivate and harvest crops. Cabral had the commissars stressed the fact that guerrillas were servants of the people.

Seizing and always maintaining the initiative was continually preached to the guerrillas by Cabral. It was what Davidson has characterized as the "strategic initiative"—"the power to impose on one's opponent the key decisions which dictate the ways in which the contest takes shape, develops over time, and moves from one phase to the next."[18] As the guerrillas made progress in liberating land and acquiring new, more sophisticated, and lethal weapons, Cabral and the party leadership would innovatively transform the military and political structures to take advantage of the new realities and better prepare for the next phase of the struggle.

At every phase of the struggle the liberation forces could not maintain the initiative without good intelligence on the strength and activities of the Portuguese armed forces. One of Cabral's directives explained the need for good intelligence:

Avoid going into any action blindfold, without knowing the enemy strength. Try to find out, both about the barracks and about the area in general, what is the mood of the enemy forces, their morale, their capability, their will to fight ... know as much as you can about the weapons the enemy possesses, their means of transport, their fuel stores, where they obtain their drinking water, etc. Each responsible worker must remember that acting against an unknown enemy is like going into a dark room, full of obstacles, but without being able to turn on a light.[19]

Likewise, it was important according to Cabral for the liberation forces to have precise knowledge of their own strength. That is,what were their capabilities in a given military situation vis a vis their manpower and weaponry. The commanders were to know the number of men available in a unit and their individual abilities and capacities to fight in a combat

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situation. Commanders were to make daily "inventory" of their manpower and weaponry. The party leader admonished the armed militants to "never do less than we can and should do, but never attempt to do something which we are not yet really in a condition to do."[20]

Cabral's concept of a clean yet total war was essentially the way the colonial revolution in Guinea Bissau was conducted. The war was clean in the sense that there was no attempt to target or terrorize civilians either black or white. However, spies or agents of the Portuguese colonialists were dealt with severely. On the other hand Cabral and the PAIGC waged a very thorough war in their effort to destroy anything that could be of assistance or value to the Portuguese. Here is how he describes his concept of total war:

> Every responsible worker and every militant of our Party, every element of the population in our land in Guinea and Cape Verde, should be aware that our struggle is not only waged on the political level and on the military level. Our struggle—our resistance—must be waged on all levels of the life of our people. We must destroy everything the enemy can use to continue their domination over our people, but at the same time we must be able to construct everything that is needed to create a new life in our land.[21]

It was essential for the nationalists to create a new and better life for the peasants in the liberated zones. It was, as Cabral understood, a crucial politico-military strategy. For if the PAIGC allowed living conditions to remain the same or deteriorate in the liberated zones, the peasants would see no benefit in continuing the struggle. After all, what were they fighting for, if not a better life? To have the struggle sustain itself and grow it was necessary to improve the life of the peasants, something Portuguese colonialism had never done.

The creation of the Peoples Stores was the most innovative element in this politico-military strategy of solidifying support for the armed struggle. According to Dr. Mustafah Dhada, an expert on the colonial revolution, these Peoples Stores "were retail outlets authorized by the party to exchange agricultural produce and raw materials for consumer goods."[22] Professor Dhada further states that:

> The consumer goods sold at people's stores were numerous: batteries, bicycles, blankets, canned milk, cigarettes, clothing, cooking utensils, fish conserves, fish fillets, fishhooks and lines, hoes, hoe blades, knives, margarine, matches, mosquito net cloth, plastic sandals, pots, salt, saucepans, scythes, sewing machines, shoes, soap, sugar, tobacco and torches.[23]

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The strategic success and importance of the Peoples Stores was recognized by the Portuguese—especially General Spinola the colonial governor of Guinea Bissau when he made "efforts to compete with [the] people's stores by greatly reducing the price of goods in areas which [had] not yet been liberated."[24] "We must successfully counter the competition" asserted Cabral.[25]

Three other innovations were important in creating a better life for the population in the liberated areas: 1) a justice system, 2) a health care system and 3) an education system. The judges were chosen democratically from among the villagers. This served to provide a fair and equitable peer system of justice which was lacking under the Portuguese colonial system.

Remarkably, Cabral was able to attain through international assistance sufficient medicines, equipment, training and personnel to create a satisfactory and efficient network of clinics and hospitals to serve the needs of the armed forces and peasants. One should remember while it was initially possible to get some brave souls to launch the military struggle without adequate medical care—it would have been impossible to get thousands of peasants committed without some medical assistance for the wounded. Merely providing an adequate medical support system did not encourage Cabral to risk high casualties. He constantly exhorted guerrillas to maximize casualties and damage to the enemy while minimizing their own. Painstaking plans were outlined and carefully discussed before an ambush was set or a Portuguese outpost attacked. Even the death of one combatant in such action was considered a grievous loss.

Cabral recognized that no innovation had more long term impact on armed struggle and nation building than the creation of an educational system. For it was through education that the people would be inculcated with the spirit of sacrifice and commitment necessary to join the revolution and armed struggle. Education in the liberated areas or Conakry would prepare the young people for training as doctors and nurses—so that they could lower the infant mortality rate or care for the war wounded. Education would provide the youths with an understanding of their relationship to Portuguese colonialism and western imperialism. The necessary

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vision and skills for a better future could only come through education.

The crowning jewel of Cabral's politico-military strategy was holding free and democratic elections in the liberated areas of Guinea Bissau pursuant to a unilateral declaration of independence by the nationalists. Although Cabral was assassinated in January 1973 (after the elections, but before the declaration of an independent Guinea Bissau in September 1973), his visionary and innovative strategy was a success. Upon the declaration of independence by the national assembly "almost one hundred countries" recognized a sovereign and independent Guinea Bissau.[26] This recognition of the PAIGC government had the potent impact of demoralizing the Portuguese military forces, thus helping to hasten the overthrow of the fascist Portuguese regime by its armed forces.

While only some key elements of Cabral's revolutionary strategy have been presented here, one can get an idea of the systematic and thorough way Cabral conducted the armed struggle in Guinea Bissau. Can African socialists hope to attain success without learning these politico-military lessons? Certainly not! For example, without proper political mobilization of peasants any African socialist insurgency is doomed to failure. African revolutionary socialist movements unable to improve or maintain the standard of living in the areas under their control are unlikely to progress to power. Without developing an educational system alongside the armed struggle, the effort toward a socialist society will flounder or peter out.

One cannot forget that the odds against African socialist insurgencies, in many ways, are even greater now than during Cabral's time, because we are no longer in a bipolar world. With the demise of the Soviet Union the type of military assistance Cabral was able to attain is no longer available to African socialists.

However, even in a unipolar world Cabral's politico-military strategies are relevant. To a certain extent those strategies were applied in southern Africa against imperialist backed forces with considerable success. While the Soviet Union will no longer be a factor in the future for socialist movements in Africa, in the 21st century living and working conditions are likely to deteriorate to the point that they will inspire and greatly

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facilitate socialist insurgencies against neo-colonial regimes on the continent. This is why one can say Amilcar Cabral is more relevant to Africa's future than to its past.

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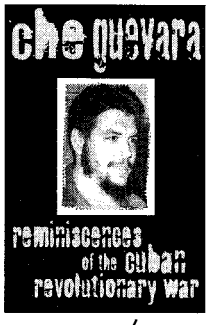

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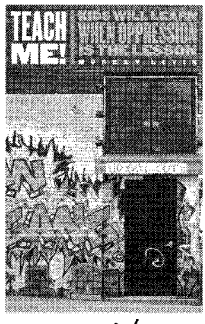

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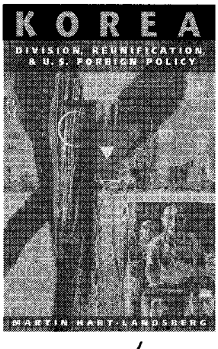

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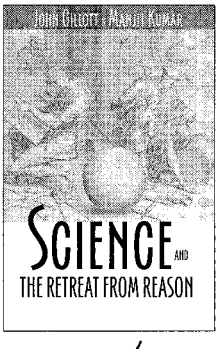

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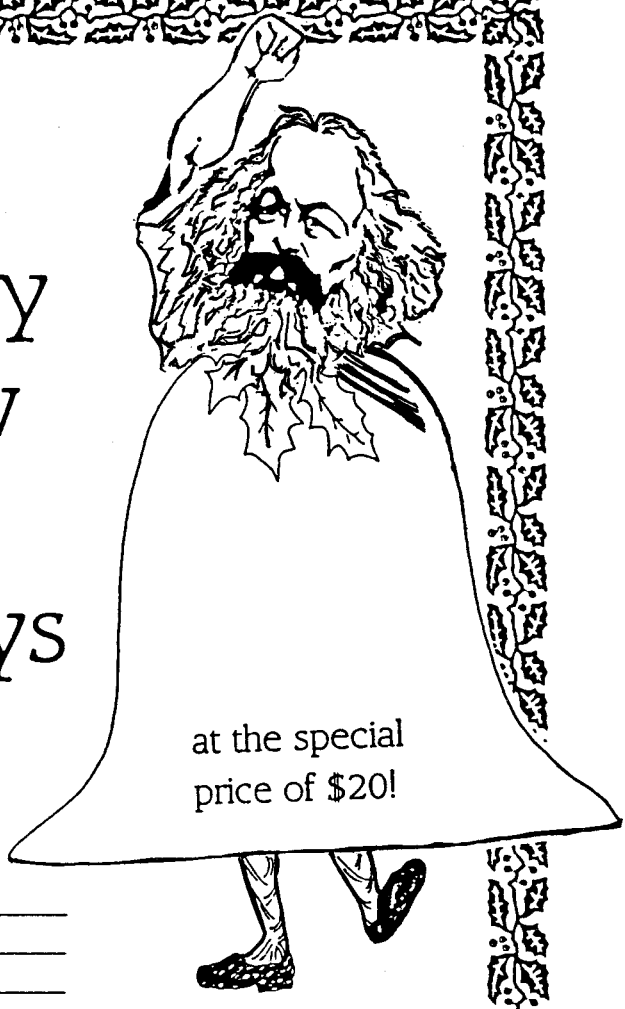

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BOOKS

L'Étranger et l'Étrangère
Camus Against the *Other*

by John L. Hess

Olivier Todd, *Albert Camus: A Life* (New York: Knopf, 1997) 434 pp., $30, cloth.

It's a mantra: Why can't we be debonair, like the French, about the private pleasures of public figures? As we were fussing over what Orrin Hatch described with pinched mouth as our very first case of "Presidential kanoodling," the French amusedly told us about President Mitterrand. Lucky Francois. *Mais, attention.* Mitterrand cheated not only on his wife and mistresses (including a mother and daughter, so it is said) but also on Marianne—*la République.* He collaborated with Vichy, defended war criminals and committed every crime imputed to Richard Nixon. We, at least, got rid of Nixon, eventually. The French have never understood why.

On both sides of the Atlantic, it is common for men and not a few women to admire heroic dalliance. Don Giovanni may end in hell, but what a score—in Spain, a thousand and three! The flip side of this sport, however, is contempt for women, as is demonstrated by new biographies of two famous modern satyrs. John F. Kennedy jested that he'd get a migraine unless he had a different partner every night, but he could rudely turn his back on an attractive prospect who wanted to talk politics. Albert Camus kept several passionate affairs going at a time and warmed his bed in between with pickups and prostitutes, but he wrote that "without desire, women bored me beyond expectation," and the time he

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"used up on them" at the expense of male business had "cost me dear."

The American journalist Seymour Hersh concluded that Kennedy's satyrism was an ugly and reckless diversion that pushed us to the brink of catastrophe, and his James-Bond machismo spelled bloody derring-do in Cuba, Vietnam, the Congo, and elsewhere. The French journalist Olivier Todd, on the contrary, dwells with respect on Camus's spectacular ability to attract and hold women, and blames him not at all for the tragic lives of his two wives. As for Camus's role in the serious affairs of mankind, Todd is as defensive as the record permits, and more.

The *New York Times Book Review* summarized Todd's *Albert Camus: A Life* as a "biography of the near-proletarian from Algeria who reached the top of the literary pole in Paris, then fell silent when he could not defend the fashionable Stalinism of the 1950s." To which a knowledgeable French reader might reply, *quelle neo-connerie!*

To begin with, Camus never fell silent, expect that he refused to speak out against the French terror in Algeria—a refusal that drew reproaches not only from the left but also from the Christian Democrat François Mauriac, the Gaullist André Malraux, the conservative Raymond Aron, and Camus's allies in the CIA-financed Congress for Cultural Freedom, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, and Stephen Spender. And it was obtuse for the *Times* reviewer, Richard Bernstein, to imply that Camus's famous break with his benefactor Jean-Paul Sartre was over Stalinism. Sartre was never a Communist, as Camus had been before the war. Indeed Todd relies on that experience to defend Camus from the charge of prejudice. He relates that the party assigned Camus to agitate for a bill to grant suffrage to a select few Algerian Arabs, but dropped the effort in 1937 in deference to Popular Front unity. Camus, Todd says, broke with the party rather than go along. Against that brief outreach to the Other, however, must be weighed the rest of Camus's life and works.

For Americans in the 1950s, Camus came on as a dashing figure, a literary genius, an existentialist icon, a champion of our side in the Cold War and a Resistance hero. He rather resembled Humphrey Bogart, and indeed flirted with a movie career; his glamor was magnified by a Nobel Prize and sanctified by his death like James Dean in an automobile crash in 1960. (Of his celebrity tour here, Todd records chiefly that he added an American to his harem.)

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The two novels he wrote during the Occupation became must reading, as they remain. I recall, however, feeling that I was missing something. Having been to Oran during the war, I wondered as I read Camus, where are the Arabs? They appear to have escaped *The Plague* entirely; only two figure, barely, in *The Stranger*—a prostitute who is beaten by the narrator's thuggish pal Raymond, and an Arab youth, perhaps a kin of hers, whom the narrator, Meursault-Camus, seeks out and senselessly murders.

I confess I was less struck then by the low status Camus accorded women—the other Other. Meursault treats with callous indifference the woman who loves him, and rebuts a suggestion by the court that his crime might have been impelled by grief and rage over his mother's death. On the contrary, he embraces an imminent release from "this whole absurd life," and the novel ends, "I had only to wish that there be a large crowd of spectators the day of my execution and that they greet me with cries of hate."

It is no wonder that the Nazi cultural *gauleiter* in Paris liked the manuscript and volunteered to help find "all the paper needed" to publish it. A hero's contempt for life and decency and the *Other*—what could have been more timely, in occupied Europe, in 1942? Or, alas, today? Camus's contempt for life did not, though, extend to his own, not literally. In *The Fall* (1956), an autobiographical monologue of self-pity, self-glorification, and disdain for mankind and especially womankind, he said he had refused to join the Resistance because he had a horror of being beaten to death in a cell. "Underground action suited neither my temperament nor my preference for exposed heights," he wrote.

Romantics like me have tried to find a metaphoric Resistance in the novels. Todd gives us no encouragement. He quotes Camus writing home from Paris, "I've just been informed bombs are falling on Paris. Life is beautiful." There is no explanation, but it fits; a Parisian once told me that those had been the best years of his life: the cabarets, the stage, the *revues* flourished with creativity. And Camus, ever complaining how he missed Algeria and despised Paris, reveled in it. When he arrived in 1940, exempt from military service as tubercular but vigorous, he was an unknown provincial striver; taken up by Sartre and introduced to Gallimard, the leading French publisher, he quickly became an editor and protegé of the house, a star author, a dramatist, and very much a man about town, often to be seen in nightclubs, at ringside, and at football games, with a beautiful woman on his arm.

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Maurice Papon, on trial for rounding up Jews for the death camps as a police prefect in Bordeaux, vainly cited in defense his admiration for Camus and his service to the Resistance. Yes, survivors said, the "Salon resistance." They referred to circles formed when Germany's defeat became visible, whose main contribution was to give members cover. Mitterrand was surely among them. After the Liberation, Gallimard barely escaped prosecution because some of its staff were resistants, and because it published not only collaborationists but also the likes of Sartre and Camus (their book jackets bore the initials of the houses's Vichyite review). Leading cultural lights of the left were perhaps too conspicuous to risk active involvement, and the Germans wisely let them alone. Todd offers a glimpse of Sartre holding court at his famous table in Café Flore, with collabos across the room and the other tendencies sitting about.

Some time in 1943, as the tide of war turned against the Nazis, colleagues of Camus persuaded him to help edit an occasional newsletter called *Combat.* The only clandestine article that Todd could definitely trace to him, however, appeared in another paper, in April, 1944. Two months later, on the night our troops landed in Normandy, Camus was bibulously celebrating the opening of one of his now forgotten plays. Upon the liberation of Paris that August, with gunfire still rattling, he hastened to take over a printing plant and help start a new daily, *Combat.*

Todd is vague about the stands *Combat* took during the turbulent beginnings of the Fourth Republic and the Cold War. Camus (who eventually quarreled with his partners and left the paper before its demise) was for a time supportive of De Gaulle, then of the center-left independent Pierre Mendes-France. In his brief term as Premier in 1954, however, Mendes negotiated peace in Vietnam and groped toward some settlement with the Algerians, neither of which Camus could stomach. An entry in his notebook about the decisive defeat of the French in Indochina, in May, 1954, tells it all:

> The fall of Dien Bien Phu. As in 1940, mixed feelings of shame and rage. The evening of the massacre, it was clear that right-wing politicians had put the unfortunate men in an indefensible position while the leftists shot them in the back.

Todd quotes the passage sympathetically, demonstrating that he, too, has moved a long way since the days of the liberal *L'Observateur* and *L'Express,* whose columns were open to Camus. Todd relates that when many Parisians voiced shock at a frightful mas-

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sacre in Algeria, Camus derided them with macho contempt as the "female left-wing."

Intellectuals who along with Camus protested the crimes of Stalin appealed to him in vain to protest the crimes of France in Algeria. He did write to military judges several times asking clemency for condemned Algerians, Todd says, but became enraged when one such letter was made public. He expressed outrage at the Soviet assault on Budapest in 1956, but approved the French-British-Israeli assault on Egypt that year. He declined to speak out when Arab bodies turned up floating in the Seine, and protesters were crushed to death by a police charge in Paris. In fact, he broke a proclaimed withdrawal from political affairs to attend a dinner in support of Algerie Françcaise, sitting at the head table with none other than Maurice Papon, then police prefect of Paris.

For this and other reasons many people were upset when Camus was awarded the Nobel prize for literature in December, 1957. It was thought that his anti-Soviet stand was a factor (Boris Pasternak was the choice the following year). Be that as it may, the occasion was marked by a single terrible phrase. Challenged in Stockholm to explain why he protested repression in Eastern Europe but not in Algeria, he replied, "I believe in justice, but I will defend my mother before justice."

It was a reply that could have been made by an Afrikaner, a Bosnian, an Israeli, an Arab, a Hindu, a Moslem, a white supremacist, a hard liner on crime—anyone in the worldwide war against the *Other.* And it was, of course, pure folly. The danger to Camus's mother arose from the refusal of the settlers to contemplate equal rights for Arabs. They wreaked havoc and brought down the Fourth republic, and destroyed any chance to live in peace in their beloved country.

Finally, it just may be worth noting that Camus singled out his mother as more precious than justice. The opening words of *The Stranger* mention her too: "Maman died today." Then he disowned her. *Maman* is a sentimental figure in the Mediterranean macho culture, as is Madonna, but women remain the *Other,* nonetheless.

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Capitalism and the Information Age

by Ben H. Bagdikian

Robert W. McChesney, Ellen Meiksins Wood, John Bellamy Foster, ed., *Capitalism and the Information Age: The Political Economy of the Global Communications Revolution (Monthly Review Press, 1998) 254 pp., $16.00, paper.*

A communications satellite can ignore national boundaries and cover a third of Planet Earth, a metaphor for escalating superpower intrusion into the politics and culture of world societies, while its intricate engineering feeds the technological euphoria that obscures antisocial realities of the "information highway."

This book of fourteen essays by a variety of authors is a useful antidote. It exposes the dark side of the new communications and currently popular words like "globalization" and "on-line democracy." It reminds us of the not-so-hidden-hand of the most powerful media corporations in the world whose multi-media content is largely designed to resign citizens to the conservative status quo and addict them to compulsive consumption.

Professor Robert W. McChesney of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, for example, warns that "globalization" has "a distinctly undemocratic edge as it effectively forces national governments to comply with the needs of globally mobile capital" in which the inequality of workers is a given. The Internet, often seen by enthusiasts, some of them progressives, as the modern medium for individual thought, to McChesney is a method to overwhelm political dissenters through the system's rapid commercialization. As Ken Hirschkop writes, "reading the exclamations of the technologically

Ben H. Bagdikian is the former dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at University of California at Berkeley, and is the author of The Media Monopoly (Beacon Press, 1997).

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enthused ... one senses that what excites them is not what it can do for the sober and responsible citizen, but the dizzying possibilities it opens up for those of a mischievously anarchistic bent." Even that prophet of digital heaven, Bill Gates, admits that "virtual equity is far easier to achieve than real world equity." Modern history is full of expectations that machines will bring social justice. Hirschkop encapsulates a central point when he (and later Chomsky) notes that "access to information was never the central problem." There is, he writes, a plentitude of information, more than enough to inform those working for positive social change. Real change is not that painless.

Ellen Meiksins Wood challenges the basic assumptions about history, about "modernity" and "postmodernity," which underlie some of the most fashionable views about the new "information age."

The popular myth of some new "electronic republic" is also rejected by Michael Dawson and John Bellamy Foster in their essay, "Virtual Capitalism." Using the new media for marketing, large corporations have acquired an even greater portion of national wealth, increasing the gap between rich and poor, with the 300 largest corporations in the world now accounting for 70 percent of foreign direct investment and 25 percent of world capital assets. This view, reflected by others in the book, is the reverse of the optimistic view of Andy Pollock's last essay seeing possibilities that new communications might increase powers of political action by the left—though it is an optimism couched in subjective "woulds" and "coulds." (A generation ago, McLuhan's "global village" also gave it a sunny glow.) In his "Global Village or Cultural Pillage," Peter Golding furthers the point in the creation of information haves and have-nots. He, too, warns that no technological magic will produce social justice until the creation of an underlying world order with "commitment to liberty, equality, and community." Similarly, Heather Menzies, of Carleton University, points out that communications technology has accelerated "the transfer of assets from the public sector to the private and the consolidation of power into the hands of larger corporate units." The corporations simply buy the knowledge and skills they need, while in the real world there is downsizing, unemployment, and underemployment. Jill Hills notes that during this period the Northern Hemisphere gained and the Southern Hemisphere lost, that declining communication costs have increased private ownership and aided the domination of the United States in international organizations compatible with American trade.

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Nicholas Baran reminds us that superior products are often discarded by dominant firms in favor of quicker profit margins or out of fear of losing control. Taxpayers often pay to create the superior products that are then appropriated for corporate use and profit. "The Internet," Baran writes, "was a brilliant technical achievement that never would have happened in the free enterprise marketplace." But now it is a shopping mall, and many of its socially useful characteristics may soon disappear. The "shopping mall" metaphor applied to schooling has been the shifty operations of Channel One, the corporate program that promised to install computers and electronic equipment into classrooms without charge (but quietly retained ownership) on condition that any school guarantee that 90 percent of its students will view Channel One's twelve minutes a day, 90 percent of the time. Those twelve minutes are ten minutes of "news" and two minutes of commercials. No editing of commercials is permitted. Michael Apple writes that by 1991, 5.4 million students, a third of all 13- to 18-year-olds, had to watch Channel One during school hours. (The numbers seem inflated, given 1991 census population figures for that age cohort; a more current figure would show that Channel One has lost ground in recent years. A 1997 web site of Channel One itself claimed only 8.1 million teenagers—though any number above zero would be repellant.)

Peter Meiksins shows how decentralized production facilities of corporations make it easier to get rid of recalcitrant and unionized workers, while simultaneously the new communications permit economic power to become even more tightly centralized. In contrast, U.S. unions and consumer groups are given a lesson by Elaine Bernard and Sid Shniad in their description of unified social action by Canadian unions and consumer groups who built effective resistance to the worst depredations upon workers and consumers when that country followed the trend to deregulation and conservatism.

With his usual clarity and precision, Noam Chomsky stresses what appears in other essays, that capitalist warfare against unions and public services has not been done in dark of night. "It was completely public. The reason it's not well known is because neither the educational system nor scholarship ... pays any attention to it." Chomsky's frequent co-author, Edward S. Herman, also addresses the propaganda issue by noting how successful it has been in foreign policy in which governmental declarations (and therefore the major

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news) reported repressions within "unfriendly" countries but remained silent or approved it within "friendly" nations.

While there is much repetition, perhaps inevitable in a collection of widely separated essays, *Capitalism and the Information Age* is a useful antidote to the endless political, corporate, and journalistic suppositions of revolutionary freedoms represented in the new communications. So far "the communications revolution" has run parallel with the growing gap between rich and poor everywhere. Social justice has never been the automatic product of a machine.

(Continued from inside back cover)

U.S. dollar (an agreement that the United States later broke). The scale and scope of global capitalism may have reached a point where they exceed the capacity of *any* economic or political power to lend even some limited order to its rampant contradictions.

It remains to be seen what, if anything, the leaders of the world's richest powers will come up with to pull capitalism, yet again, out of a crisis which is every day proving itself more serious than the most pessimistic commentators thought it was the day before. Much as we'd like to predict that a crisis on this scale will lead to some major and positive transformations, no one can doubt that we're in for a rough ride. Then again, no one can doubt either that sensible people everywhere will again start giving serious thought to *real*—socialist—alternatives.

After the last issue went to press, but too late to make corrections, we discovered some mistakes:

On p. 19, Zasunch should be Zasulich.

On p. 23, "irregardless" should be "regardless."

And James Rinehart had sent us a correction and additions to his book review which never got entered. On p. 63, the date 1947 in the last paragraph should be 1974. In the previous paragraph the last two sentences should have been replaced with the following: "This is a tall order, especially considering the divisions within the Canadian labor movement. Nevertheless, the growing backlash against neo-liberal policies in Canada (and in many regions of the world) is a welcome signal that this is an opportune time to begin to work toward the realization of this goal." The final paragraph should have begun "This excellent book," deleting "In a period when labor movements around the world are losing political influence, bargaining power, and members." If readers find other mistakes, especially serious ones, in this or any subsequent issue, do let us know.

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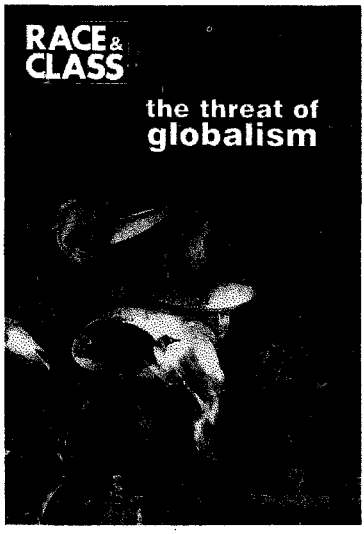

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(Continued from inside front cover)
at least had something like a social democratic party in the political mainstream, and socialist ideas have never been seen there as quite so alien and dangerous as they are in the United States. So maybe it doesn't take quite as much in Canada to provoke reflection on the weaknesses of capitalism as it does in the United States. At any rate, in the United States it does take something close to collapse of the global economy to get "opinion leaders" to think the unthinkable: that capitalism may not be all it's cracked up to be.

Well, we seem to be there now. Who would have thought, even a few months ago, that we would hear the kinds of things we're hearing now from Wall Street and the conservative press, not just about the worst global crisis since the Great Depression but about the dangers of "free market" capitalism? Who would have thought that yesterday's prophets of globalization would today be singing the praises of capital controls? Who would have thought that words like "overcapacity," hitherto most likely to be spoken by Marxist economists in the pages of *Monthly Review*, would cross the lips of investment analysts or financial columnists? Who would have thought that, after many years of "there is no alternative," five minutes later the same advocates of TINA are desperately scrambling for *some* kind of alternative? And is there a message in the fact just a year after the Nobel Prize in economics went to the geniuses behind that emblem of contemporary capitalism, the notoriously ill-fated hedge fund, LCTM, this year's prize has gone to Amartya Sen, for his humane and progressive work on issues such as global poverty?

We don't want to get carried away. Wall Street won't suddenly be witnessing a mass conversion to socialism. But at the very least, people who understand the language of turbulent markets, and whose material interests are very much at stake, are being forced to consider the kinds of interventions in the capitalist economy that only yesterday were anathema to them.

Ironically, these people are likely to be, and already have been, less timid in calling for reform of the world financial system than the "liberal" and even so-called leftist governments which are now in the majority among the most advanced capitalist countries. The performance of those governments so far has been anything but bold. The inadequacy of the pathetically weak proposals that came out of the recent G7 meeting sent global markets into a spin, and even the somewhat more interventionist proposals emerging out of the informal EU summit have come nowhere near the scale of the problem. It might be interesting to speculate about this rare disjunction between predatory capitalists demanding reform and left-wing governments refusing to provide it.

Of course it may just be that, for all the U.S.'s dominance in the global economy, there is no single capitalist power, not even the United States, that has the kind of hegemony today that would allow it to bring a degree of discipline to global capitalism, as was done in 1944 by the Bretton Woods Agreement under U.S. leadership and the aegis of the

(Continued on page 58)

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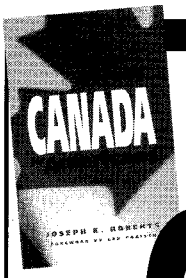

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